THE BLACK BAT

by G. Wayman Jones

CAPTAINS OF DEATH

the Nemesis of Crime in two thrilling tales of espionage

THE BLACK BAT'S SPY TRAIL

$14.95

The Black Bat's Spy Trail *and* Captains of Death

TWO CLASSIC ADVENTURES OF

THE BLACK BAT

by Norman Daniels
writing as "G. Wayman Jones"

plus THE MASK, ARCH-ENEMY OF CRIME by Kin Platt,
a rare classic from the Golden Age of Comics

and new historical essays by
Anthony Tollin and Will Murray

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THE BLACK BAT

Volume 3

Presenting TWO Complete Book-length novels from the files of Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime, as originally edited by Leo Margulies, Mort Weisinger and Jack Schiff

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Front cover art by Ernest Chiriacka

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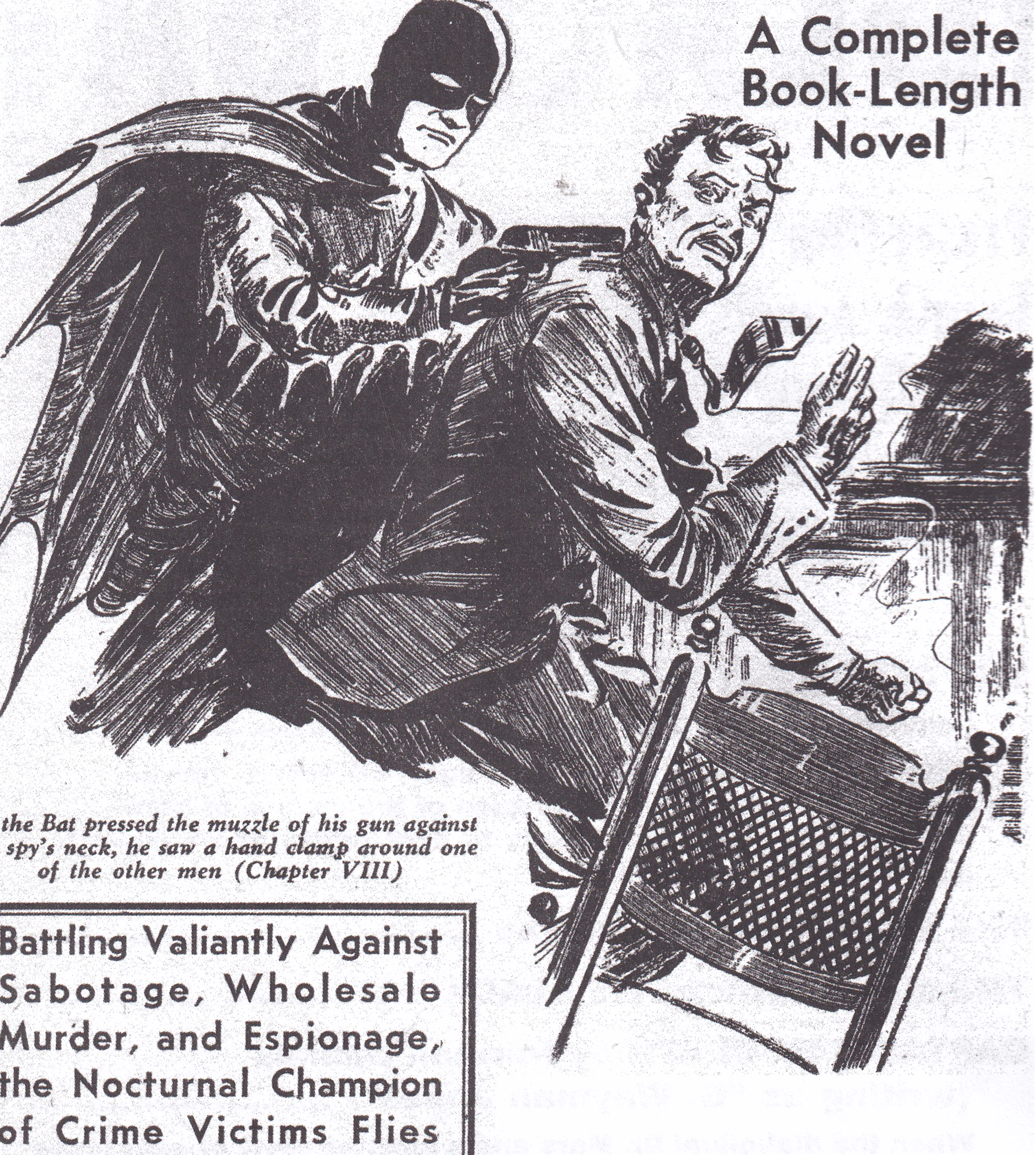
THE BLACK BAT'S

A Complete Book-Length Novel



As the Bat pressed the muzzle of his gun against the spy's neck, he saw a hand clamp around one of the other men (Chapter VIII)

Battling Valiantly Against Sabotage, Wholesale Murder, and Espionage, the Nocturnal Champion of Crime Victims Flies Into the Valley of Death!

CHAPTER I
Death Lurks High

ON the thirty-second floor of the Falkner Building a pair of burly guards stood before the entrance of an office door labeled SOCIETY AMERICANA. They made no attempt to hide the shoulder-holstered guns they wore under their coats as two men left the private elevator.

The first to emerge was tall, white-haired and possessed of finely chiseled features. His clothing spoke quietly of an expensive tailor.

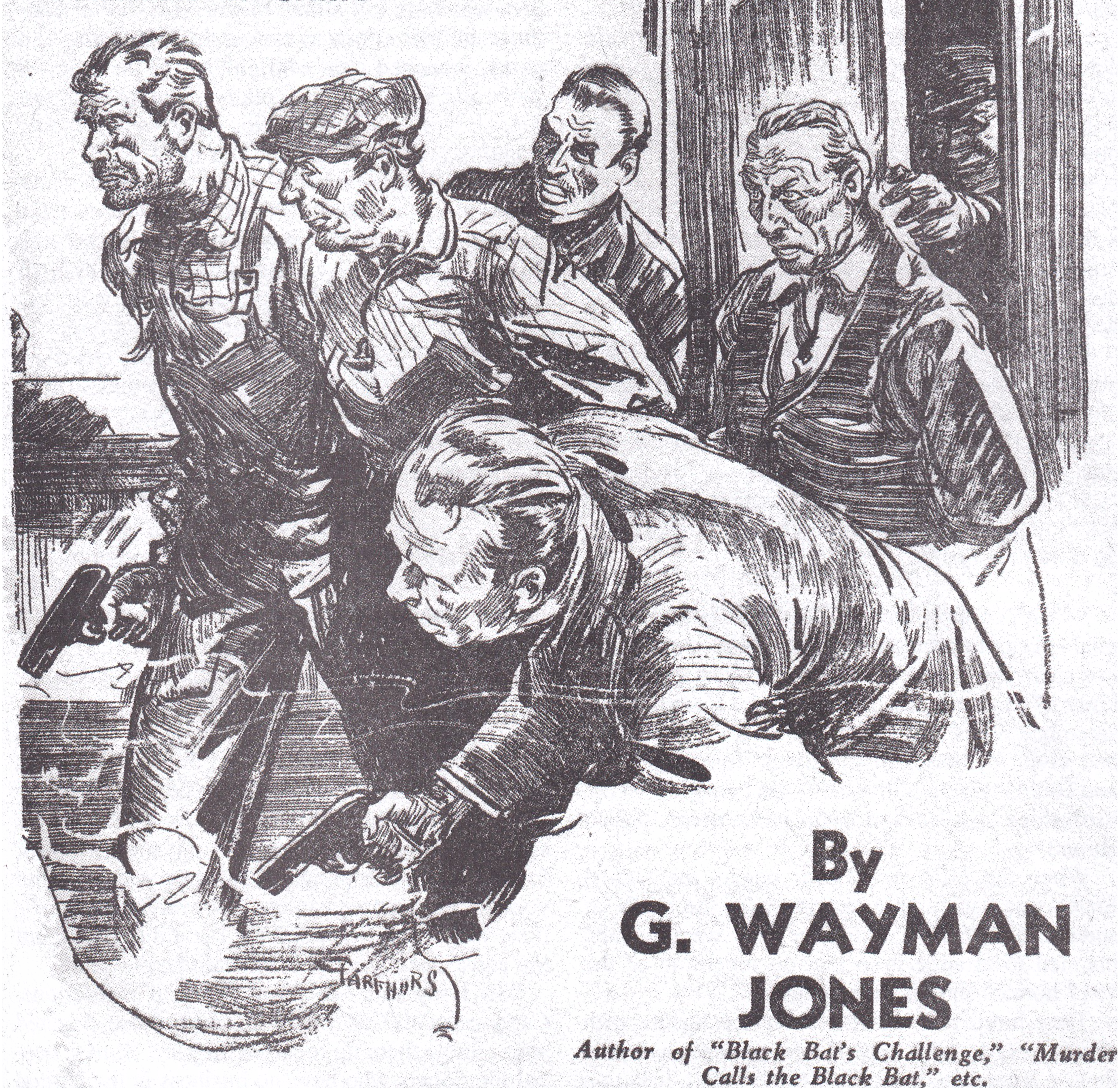
His companion's dress was different. A ready-made suit hung from bony shoulders without much attention to drape or fit. This man's hat was a battered, cheap fedora, and he kept a cold cigar constantly rotating between his teeth.

The guards at the office door drew themselves erect and touched their foreheads in salute. One spoke to the second man.

"Everybody is inside, Chief. We searched 'em, whether they liked it or not. Let's see"—the guard consulted a piece of dirty note paper—"there's

SPY TRAIL

Featuring Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime



By
G. WAYMAN JONES

Author of "Black Bat's Challenge," "Murder Calls the Black Bat," etc.

Fisk, Fouquet and Brooks. That's the committee. Collier and Sloane went in two minutes ago. The only guy missing is Lockhart."

The bony-shouldered man chuckled. "Good work, boys. This is Mr. Lockhart with me. He's chairman of this committee and remember, boys—this is no ordinary case. We're helping these men rout out all kinds of 'isms' and spies throughout the nation. It's a great patriotic job and we should be proud to be a part of it."

Lockhart nodded in complete agreement, opened the office door with a key and waved his companion ahead of him. They removed their coats and hats in an anteroom. Lockhart rubbed his hands gleefully.

"Allen, you've done a good job. All of us have received threats in one form or another, and your detective agency has prevented the spies from inflicting any kind of injury upon us. From this moment on, however, your vigilance will have to be increased, for inside this meeting room are Collier and Sloane, agents we have employed to check on certain groups of men we suspect as fomenters of trouble for our country. They have

Once More the Black Bat Spreads His Wings

worked hard and are ready to report facts that may startle the whole nation."

Joe Allen, head of one of the largest private detective agencies in the city, removed his cigar and nodded. "Don't worry, Mr. Lockhart. I have thirty good men. Every one of 'em is engaged in protecting this committee which you head. We cover you at your home, your offices and enroute to any place at all. We're set to shoot at the drop of a hat. Every person who enters the lobby of this building is scrutinized. No one is allowed above the thirty-first floor, and the private elevator is watched every second."

Lockhart led the way to a closed office door and pushed it open. Inside, six men who were gathered around a square table, arose in a body. Lockhart walked to the head of the table, bowed to the six men and watched as Joe Allen eyed each one carefully. The detective seemed satisfied, waved to Lockhart and withdrew from the room, locking the door on the outside.

EVERYONE in the room realized that anything might occur. For four months the Society Americana had spent thousands of dollars in a fight against all kinds of foreign spies rampant in the United States since hostilities had broken out abroad. Each man had vivid memories of the Black Tom explosion, and could imagine railroad bridges being blown up, battleships scuttled and troop movements flashed abroad.

When the First World War began, the United States was hardly able to cope with the horde of spies and saboteurs. This time four wealthy men planned to arrange it so that no repetition of the 1917 horrors should happen again.

They hired two ex-Secret Service agents with clean records and dependable reputations, paid them a handsome salary and turned them loose on an intense spy hunt. Their orders were definite.

Small fry, minor bund leaders and propaganda spreaders were left alone. Sloane and Collier concentrated their efforts to expose the higher ups, and brainy, moneyed men who guided the destinies of spy work and were the really dangerous types. Deprived of their leadership, minor spies would promptly tuck their tails and run for it.

In many respects the work of the Society Americana resembled that of the Dies Committee except that the society worked undercover and with the utmost secrecy. They were not hampered by legal red tape, and so far they had progressed well. Yet that the spy leaders were aware of this attempt to frustrate their plans was apparent in that members of the Society had received grim warnings to stop butting their heads against a stone wall.

Lockhart sat down, clasped his hands together and leaned across the table.

"Durrance," he said, "this is your first appearance at one of our meetings. As an international attorney of the highest reputation we have presented certain evidence for your consideration. Are we within our rights to continue this work?"

Durrance, a heavy-set man of about forty-five, carefully placed gold-rimmed pince-nez glasses on his nose, arose and cleared his throat.

"You are not, gentlemen. Some of your work has been directed against accredited diplomatic agents of foreign powers. They possess a certain immunity from investigations such as you have started against them. I should say—stop this business now, forget about such things as spies or you will find yourselves in a predicament that even all your millions will not pull you out of. I could say that, but my conscience would never again be the same.

"So I say this—to the devil with restrictions. Carry on with this work. Uncover those damned spies. Show them up for what they are. Slinky, bestial interlopers who have no business in the United States. Smash their plans wherever possible. I'll stand firmly behind you and if there is any trouble, I'll exert my knowledge to protect you. There will be no fee. This is a patriotic duty and one I will enjoy."

There was a flutter of applause as Durrance sat down. Then Lockhart turned to the two men who sat at the opposite end of the table. They seemed calm and betrayed not the slightest emotion over Durrance's speech. Both had their arms on the table; both regarded Lockhart with unblinking eyes. He noticed this and shivered. There was something unholy in that look.

"Collier and Sloane," he said finally. "are our two crack agents. They have risked their lives to

and Goes Forth to Combat Treachery!

gather pertinent information and now they are ready to reveal what they know. Mr. Fisk has already ascertained that their investigation has borne fruit."

HENRY FISK, at Lockhart's right hand, nodded. He was a slender, average sized man who had a habit of constantly blinking his eyes in a nervous manner. He seemed ill at ease, running a finger along a limp collar despite the fact that the temperature of the office was controlled by air conditioning and wasn't warm enough to cause the perspiration that glistened on his brow.

"I—I think," he said with a catch in his voice, "that we'd better listen to Collier and Sloane first. I've only been told part of what they know and—and it's astounding. It—it's made an old man out of me."

Across the table Fouquet, an energetic man of about sixty-five, seemed greatly impressed. At his side Hugh Brooks, polished and able international financier, seemed languid in comparison. Hugh Brooks never lost his poise, never betrayed his emotions,

Lockhart waved a hand at the two queerly staring agents.

"Speak, gentlemen," he said, and sat down and looked at them expectantly.

But neither man moved a muscle. Henry Fisk, one of those closest to the agents, suddenly kicked his chair back, gave a strangled scream.

"My God, they're dead!" he cried. Lockhart jumped to his feet. The others started up in consternation, as Lockhart rushed around the table, put a hand on Collier's shoulder. The agent sagged sideways from the weight of the hand. Then, slowly, he toppled off the chair.

Sloane, the second agent, sat there like a frozen Sphinx, but Lockhart had only to look into his face to see that death was written there. Something seemed to have happened to Sloane's eyes. There were no pupils. They had contracted until the naked eye could no longer see them.

Lockhart looked around at the other men: no one spoke. No one seemed able to speak. Lockhart drew out a small envelope from his pocket, removed a white card and read the message on it aloud in a shaking voice. It was:

> *Your agents will make no report. All of you are doomed from this moment on. You have stepped on the neck of a rattlesnake. Serpents bite.*

"I received that this morning," Lockhart said. "I didn't tell you about it because I thought it impossible for any man to reach our agents. Good Lord—Collier and Sloane walked in here! It seems I'm wrong. Fisk, rap on the door and bring Detective Joe Allen in here. Then, gentlemen, we'll have to call in the police."

Fisk tried to answer, but his throat seemed paralyzed. The hand that tapped meekly on the door shook badly, but the key turned, and Joe Allen came in. He gaped at the two agents and then went to work. He knelt beside the fallen Collier, made a quick examination, and then examined the seated body of Sloane.

"See here," he rasped, "no one leaves this office, get me? No one! These two men were murdered! Someone in here stuck a hypodermic needle into the back of their necks. It must have contained a violent poison. I saw these two men walk into this office. They were all right then."

Lockhart looked around. "Where is Fisk? What's happened to him?"

JOE ALLEN arose hastily, raced through the outer office and opened the hall door. His two men knew that something was wrong, but they had their orders and had stayed in position. Each held a gun exposed now.

"Fisk?" one of them answered Allen's barked question. "Yeah, sure. He came outta there like he was shot from a gun. Hollered something about a murder and then beat it for the elevator. We let him go because you only gave orders to stop anybody from going into the place. O'course we know he musta been nuts. Imagine—a murder in there!"

"Two murders, you saps," Allen said savagely. "Send word down to the other boys to get Fisk. Get him if they have to put a bullet through his legs."

Joe Allen sprinted back into the conference room, stopped just inside the door and eyed the four men around the table. Lockhart was impatient for action, Fouquet was pale and drawn, his eyes riveted on the corpse that still sat at the table. Hugh Brooks, his emotions as impenetrable as ever, kept tapping a pencil eraser against the table top. In no other manner did he exhibit just how these two mysterious murders affected him.

"Fisk," Joe Allen ground out, "took a powder on us. I mean he ran away. The guy must know something. I'm putting all my men to work finding him."

"Do you think," Fouquet asked nervously, "that he killed these two men?"

Allen waved his arms in exasperation. "How do I know what to think—yet? This is a job for the cops. It's got beyond our control now. Mr. Lockhart, you better phone Headquarters."

Lockhart merely nodded his head, walked into the outer office, crossed it and vanished into another room. Perhaps three or four minutes passed. Then Fouquet strolled over to a window and looked out. He saw the tiny forms of men running toward the building far below. Fouquet pushed the window sill and leaned out cautiously.

"Allen," he yelled. "Allen, I—look. I—I think somebody is hurt down there. I can see a figure lying on the sidewalk."

Joe Allen growled something about uncalled for interruptions, but he looked out of the window. When he ducked back, he was pale and drawn.

"Everybody stay here," he warned. "If you take chances and show yourselves, the killer may rub you out, too. I'm going down to the street. I—I'm afraid the corpse down there is—Lockhart."

Allen darted out of the office, looked around for Lockhart and didn't find him. He got into the private elevator and sent it down. On the street level he rushed through the lobby, battled his way through the crowd and then he stopped abruptly. The man who lay on the sidewalk had fallen from the building. He was undoubtedly Lockhart for he wore the same clothing and was exactly the same build. However, positive identification was impossible for the corpse no longer had a face. It was nothing but a welter of blood and mangled flesh.

Then a detective cruiser howled up with dying siren. The rear door opened, and Lieutenant McGrath of the Homicide Squad alighted. He was about forty-five, beefy-faced, chunky, but extremely fast in action. There was a permanent determined look on his face. McGrath was all cop. He'd only recently been raised from the rank of sergeant. He'd battled his way up from the ranks and was considered one of the best men on the force. McGrath had only one bane in life—the Black Bat! The mere mention of that eerie figure's name was enough to raise McGrath's blood pressure.

Joe Allen saw him, squeezed over to his side and tugged at his sleeve.

"Well, Allen," McGrath growled. "you got your long beak in this mess?"

"I'm in it to my ankles—maybe over my head," Joe Allen answered. "That guy on the sidewalk ain't the only dead man. There's two ex-Secret Service lads on the thirty-second floor of this building, And, Mister, they are 'ex'—what I mean. Somebody stuck poisoned hypo needles into the back of their necks. McGrath, if you ever bumped your head against the impossible, you're about to do it now, Them two boys were murdered with five witnesses looking on and—listen to this—nobody was close enough to either man to kill him."

"And this guy on the sidewalk," McGrath gestured toward the grisly corpse. "I suppose he just tried to take a walk out of the window. Don't be a fool, Allen. If there's been a double murder upstairs, this guy did it and took a dry dive in preference to facing the chair. 'It's as easy as that."

"Yeah?" Joe Allen asked derisively. "Easy as that, huh? You don't know who this dead guy happens to be. It's Lockhart, the big shot himself. He hired those two men who were killed upstairs. He paid them to dig up information. Do you think he'd knock them off?

McGrath whistled softly and his face grew harsh. "Lockhart, eh? Stick around, Allen. If you'd like to keep that private dick license, stick around, understand?"

CHAPTER II

Accident or Murder

ALMOST directly across the great city a man sat before the fireplace of his home. Tony Quinn, once a promising young District Attorney, had been blinded by acid in a battle with crooks who sought to destroy important evidence.

A thin-faced man, almost entirely bald, entered the room with a tray which he placed carefully on a coffee table, poured a cup of coffee and handed it to Tony Quinn. Kirby Norton, better known as "Silk," was Quinn's all-around servant and closest friend. He acted as Quinn's eyes when anyone was present. For Tony Quinn was not really blind.

"Nice day," Quinn said with a smile. "I think I'll take my cane and tap myself out a little walk. Need the exercise, Silk?"

The valet poured in a small quantity of cream and added a lump of sugar,

"Sometimes," he said, "I think you ought to give up this business, sir, and let everyone know you're no longer stone blind. You can't get away with it forever. Sooner or later some smart crook will find out Tony Quinn, blind man, is really The Black Bat! If Lieutenant McGrath doesn't prove it first."

Tony Quinn smiled, his whole face lighting up. It was a strong, good face, but some people might have winced at the sight of him. The corrosive acid hurled into his face had wrought deep scars. Tony Quinn made it a point never to think of them. They indicated positive evidence that the same acid had seared his eyes into permanent blindness.

But Tony Quinn had recovered the use of his eyes. Months after his fight with the acid-throwing crooks, when he had reached the depths of despair, an extremely pretty girl had appeared out of the night. She was Carol Baldwin. Acting under her orders, Tony Quinn had secretly visited a surgeon in a small midwestern town. There he had recovered his sight

through the substitution of another man's healthy corneas.

Later he discovered that he owed his sight to Carol's father, who had been a detective. A thug's bullet had smashed into the back of Baldwin's head, paralyzing several nerves that controlled the eyes and blinding him. Dying, and without the slightest hope, he had sent Carol to bring Quinn to this surgeon. Under the doctor's skilled hands the detective's eyes became Tony Quinn's. Shortly after the operation Carol's father died, but in dying he gave new life to Tony Quinn.

So was the Black Bat born. Resolved to fight crime with crime's own ruthless methods, he kept the recovery of his sight a strict secret. As blind Tony Quinn, ex-district attorney, he would never be suspected. But at night he prowled the darkness garbed in black clothing with a hood that covered his entire head and a cape that was ribbed and scalloped to resemble the wings of a bat, The underworld had come to know this figure and dread it.

There were countless stories about the weird powers of this strange creature, but only three people knew the real truth. As a sort of repayment for his months of blindness, Quinn discovered that he was able to see as well in darkness as he was in the brightest sunlight. Even colors were vivid. And yet his hearing and sense of touch had grown extremely acute during his period of blindness, and the Black Bat found use for all of these senses.

Three people knew his dual identity: Silk Norton was one of them. Once Silk had been a confidence man, as smooth as the nickname that still clung to him. Then there was Jack O'Leary, known as Butch because of his vast bulk and insatiable appetite. Slower in thought than Silk, Butch was nevertheless a formidable antagonist in any kind of trouble. His devotion to the Bat was strong. No form of torture would have made him reveal the Bat's true identity.

Carol Baldwin was the third person in the know. She also took an active part in the Bat's constant campaign against those men who believed they were greater than the law. Blonde, decidedly pretty, a bond stronger than mere friendship had grown between her and the Bat. Both she and Butch maintained quarters not far from Tony Quinn's big residence. Their visits to him were accomplished by means of a hidden tunnel into his house. The Bat took no chances on placing either of them in danger.

QUINN finished his coffee, used his left hand to feel around for the table and then put the cup on it. He never forgot that he was supposed to be stone blind. Even though he was sure that no one watched, he continually acted his part every moment except when he became the Bat.

CAROL

Someone punched the door buzzer. Silk started up and his eyes flashed suspiciously. Quinn settled back in his chair. His eyes were dead looking. They stared just above the glowing embers in the fireplace and the cleverest eye specialist would have sworn Tony Quinn was blind.

Silk ushered in a neatly dressed man who seemed to be highly agitated. He accepted the chair that Silk shoved toward him. Then he leaned close to Quinn.

"I'm Rigby," he said. "Remember me?"

Quinn shook his head slowly and wrinkled his forehead in thought. "If I could see your face, perhaps I might recognize you. Your voice does seem familiar."

"I used to be a member of the F.B.I.," Rigby answered. "About eight months before you were—blinded, I had a long talk with you about a minor spy ring. You were District Attorney. We broke up the ring easily."

Tony Quinn's face lighted up. "Of course," he said. "How are you, Mr. Rigby? What can I do for you?"

Rigby dropped his voice to almost a whisper. "There's the very devil to pay, Mr. Quinn, Two other ex-agents and myself were retained by a group of millionaires calling themselves the Society Americana. They've been throwing money and time into one of the biggest spy hunts I've ever heard of. Worthy work, but dangerous. I think the spy ring is wise to me. About two hours ago I was nearly shoved off a subway platform in front of an oncoming train. Plain luck was on my side."

"But what do you want from me?" Quinn asked with a puzzled frown.

Rigby leaned closer. "I think that spy ring we knew—they were delving in smuggling at that time, too, if you recall—is the nucleus from which

this massive ring has grown. The F.B.I. turned the case over to you for prosecution because there was a murder mixed up in it. You talked to the important men involved in that affair. Did they tell you anything significant? About who was paying them and directing their activities, I mean?"

Quinn shook his head slowly. "There were two men, indicted and convicted of killing a police officer. They both went to the electric chair with sealed lips. Spies certainly should be wiped out before they get too deeply entrenched. Tell me more about this Society Americana. Who comprises it? I'd be agreeable to contribute financially to their work. I wouldn't be of much use otherwise."

Rigby sighed and arose. "I'm sorry, sir. I've promised not to divulge any information, even to a reliable person as I know you to be. I just hoped you might have some little lead. Sloane and Collier dug up something important. As for me, all I've found out is that pocket watches fly."

"A watch that flies?" Quinn frowned, "What kind of nonsense is that?"

"I'm not so sure that it is nonsense," Rigby answered "That's the whole trouble with all this. I'm not sure about anything. But Sloane and Collier are. They know what that watch really means. That's why I'm working another angle and leaving that for them."

"It's most intriguing," Quinn said. "I'd like to know more about it. A blind man has so little to think about."

RIGBY shook hands with Quinn. "Sorry, even if I knew, I couldn't tell you at this stage of the game. Don't bother to get up, Mr. Quinn. I can find the door all right."

Quinn smiled. "I was just getting ready to take a little walk when you arrived. I'll go to the door with you."

Rigby bade him goodbye at the entrance and hurried down the path to the street. He started along the sidewalk, and Quinn was turning away when he heard the roar of a powerful motor. He turned back. The mask of blindness over his eyes vanished. A big sedan was racing down the street and turning toward the sidewalk.

Rigby saw it coming, gave a yell of alarm and tried to get out of the way. But the sedan hurtled the curb, struck the investigator and flung him back against a high stone wall. The car kept coming, struck the wall and pinned Rigby there.

"Silk!" Quinn called out. "Silk—hurry!"

Silk came barging down the hallway. He looked out the door, took in the situation at a glance and began running toward the wrecked car. Quinn's cane tapped an impatient tattoo on the porch. He ached to go over there and find out what had happened, but other people were approaching, and Tony Quinn was a blind men.

A radio car howled up and then an ambulance. Silk returned, his face somewhat ashen.

"Dead, sir. Smashed to pieces against the brick wall. Whoever did it jumped over the wall and got clear. The cops say the car was stolen about an hour ago."

Suddenly Quinn's hand gripped Silk tightly. Another car had pulled up and Lieutenant McGrath climbed out of it

"McGrath will learn that Rigby came to see me just before he was killed. Several people saw him coming out."

"But what of it?" Silk asked. "Can't a man call on you and get killed by a hit-and-run driver a few minutes later? You don't think McGrath will try to pin that on you?"

"No, of course not," Quinn replied. "But, Silk, Rigby was investigating a spy ring. He was murdered—I'm sure of it—for he told me of another attempt on his life just before he came here. Rigby discovered something and it was dangerous for someone if he went on living. Do you think the Black Bat is going to stand by and let spies get away with a thing like this? Spies in a neutral country are war makers—and murderers. I detest them more than I hate ordinary crime and the poor fools who think they are clever enough to beat the law. I'm going to find out why Rigby was killed and by whom. The Bat will come to life again and that will make McGrath grow suspicious. Here he comes. If he questions you, tell the truth."

McGrath walked up on the porch, shoved his hat to the back of his head and surveyed Tony Quinn from head to foot.

"It's Lieutenant McGrath, sir," Silk said softly.

"I know," Quinn smiled. "I could tell his step a mile away. You have flat feet, Lieutenant."

McGRATH propped himself against the porch railing. "I didn't come here to talk about the state of my feet, Mr. Quinn. There's been a man killed down the street. I understand he paid you a visit just before he died. What did he want?"

Quinn's blank, staring eyes were centered about a foot above McGrath's head. "He was investigating something or other. He came asking information about a case I handled when I—could see."

"Yeah," McGrath said derisively, "it couldn't be that he thought you were the Black Bat and came to ask your help? Sometimes I have my doubts, but right now I think Rigby came to see you because he was tipped off that you are the Bat. Rigby was an ex-G-man. He's not the first ex-G-man to die today. Two others were murdered in offices rented by some crazy outfit called the Society Americana.

Rigby was a pal of theirs. I knew all three of them.

"And another thing—a millionaire named Lockhart took a dive out a window and made unrecognizable hash of his features. Maybe he knocked himself off—maybe he was murdered. I'm not sure yet, but I am positive that Rigby knew something about those kills."

Quinn's impassive features betrayed none of the surprise raging within him. Sloane and Collier dead? One of the men who hired them also dead—perhaps murdered, too. Now Rigby had met sudden, violent death. What was it all leading to? Certainly now, despite McGrath's suspicions, the Bat would take a hand.

"I'm sorry, Lieutenant," Quinn said slowly. "I told the truth. Kirby, my valet, was in the room at the time and heard everything that was said. If you continue to believe I am the Black Bat, that is your privilege. It was my impression that this Bat person worked alone and that no one knew his identity. Then how do you account for Rigby coming here and asking my help because I am the Bat? Think again, Lieutenant, and don't forget that I happen to be blind."

McGrath shrugged. "Well, I got nothing personal against you, Quinn. When you were the D.A. we handled some fancy cases together and did a good job on them. But I still think you're the Black Bat, blind or not. Someday I'll nail you. The Bat may fight crime just as I do, but he breaks plenty of laws in doing it. Remember that!"

McGrath bit off the tip of a cigar, glared at Silk and left,

"Just a good-natured cop, gentle as a lamb and with lots of tact," Silk commented, "But he's no dumbbell, sir. That man would give his back teeth to land you. Now shall we get ready for that walk?"

"Walk?" Quinn said blankly. "Oh—no, Silk. It's late afternoon. In a short time it will be dark and bats will be flying. I don't even know who or what we're dealing with, Silk, but four murders in one afternoon indicates the men behind them aren't given to uneasy consciences. Better see that my guns are in trim."

"Yes, sir." Silk scurried away.

CHAPTER III
Visitor in Black

QUINN walked back into the house. Silk was already drawing the curtains in the study. Quinn walked up to a blank wall, touched a hidden control, and a door opened. He stepped into a white tiled laboratory, so constructed that only by actually tearing the house down would it be discovered. From this secret room led a tunnel beneath Quinn's estate, ending in a small garden house at the far end of the heavily arbored yard. By this means Quinn could leave and enter without being seen.

The laboratory was equipped with all manner of scientific devices used in detecting and suppressing crime. During the weeks in which he had to wait for his eyes to heal, Quinn had studied. At first Silk read to him and then, when the bandages were removed from his eyes, Quinn had taken a more active part in training himself for this grim fight. Independently wealthy, he could afford to spend large sums on equipment, and the best police lab in the world was no better furnished than this.

Quinn opened a small closet and drew out a strange looking costume. He donned the hood which covered his head completely except for small slits through which he could see. There were black garments and a cape for his shoulders which fastened under the arms. It billowed out and became taut when he spread his arms wide. In shadow or darkness, Quinn looked like an immense bat, wings outspread for quick flight.

"What's the first step?" Silk asked as he carefully removed surplus oil from a thirty-eight automatic. Then he added hopefully, "Any chance of my getting in on it?"

"You are in," Quinn said. "So actively that you'll have to disguise yourself. One of those rigs you used when you floated around the country taking pennies from those poor orphans and widows."

Silk grimaced. "The only men I ever cheated were those with more larceny in their hearts than I had—and everyone of 'em could afford it. Anyway, I spent all the dough, so it's just another way to keep up distribution of wealth, sir."

Quinn chuckled, because Silk had completely reformed and he was as trustworthy as a man could be. "Use the disguise which makes you look like a long-haired professor. Go to the Falkner Building where the men were murdered and Lockhart took a dive out of the window. Find out everything you can about the society and everyone who was on the scene when all this happened."

"And you, sir?" Silk asked.

Quinn began removing his outer clothes and replacing the comfortable tweeds with the Bat's garb. He put black crepe-soled shoes on his feet, slipped his hands into black silk gloves and surveyed himself in the mirror. Certainly this weird being looked nothing like Tony Quinn. Neither did the brilliant, piercing eyes that glittered through the slits in the mask resemble the dead, blank eyes of Tony Quinn.

"Contact Butch and Carol," he said. "Have them stand by for trouble. I'm going to find out what

killed those two agents and whether or not Lockhart really jumped or was pushed. From what I've learned his features were practically eradicated. If he didn't land on his head the fall probably was not responsible. I'm going to the morgue, Silk."

After darkness had set completely, Quinn used the tunnel, reached the garden house and made sure he was unobserved. He slipped out of the gate, ran lightly along the sidewalk to where a cheap, rather battered coupé was parked. It was always there, in readiness for the Bat's use.

THE CITY MORGUE was located in a quiet part of the city. Anyone who happened to be passing by might have thought they had seen a flitting shadow darting alongside the gray building, but they would have passed it off as a figment of their imagination, induced by what that building represented. The Bat's black outfit blended perfectly with the darkness.

He reached the back of the building, saw one of the morgue wagons parked in front of the garage and listened carefully to be sure no one was close by. Now the Bat's super-sensitive eyes became invaluable. They penetrated the night as though it was daylight. His keen hearing detected no sound to give away the presence of another person nearby, and he saw no one.

The Bat stepped beneath a window of stained glass. He drew a thin piece of steel from his pocket, slid it between the sashes and opened the latch. He raised the window quietly, climbed inside and closed it again.

He was in some kind of a storeroom. Piled-up boxes stacked at random on the floor were no menace to his movements for they were revealed plainly to his abnormal eyes. He reached a door, opened it a crack and looked into a long corridor. Now he heard voices. One of them made him grimace. Detective-lieutenant McGrath was talking.

"Okay, Doc, you say it was a shot of hydrocyanic acid. But what I'd like to know is how could anybody walk up behind two healthy men, slide a needle into the back of their necks and inject the stuff without the victim yelling? A needle hurts—even in the back of the neck, doesn't it?"

"It does, and these two men were injected very deeply. I don't pretend to understand how it was done, Lieutenant. That's your job. Now if you'll wait a moment, we'll go down to the autopsy room and give Lockhart a going over."

Lieutenant McGrath, draped on the edge of a desk, didn't see the shadow that slipped along the corridor. He was too busy trying to puzzle out how those agents had permitted the murderer to poison them without making the slightest resistance.

Five minutes later, McGrath grimaced when the medical examiner removed the sheet covering what

THE BLACK BAT

was left of Lockhart. The dead man's face wasn't pleasant to look upon. The doctor worked methodically, dictating notes to one of the morgue attendants as he progressed. Finally he began drawing off his rubber gloves.

"This man died of a fractured skull—to put it mildly," he said. "His whole head was caved in. There are no signs of poison nor of bruises that he might have suffered if someone had forced him out of the window. I think we can safely assume that he committed suicide, Lieutenant."

McGrath sighed. "And won't that make my life happier. If he bumped himself off, he must have had a hand in the murder of those two ex-G-men. And will you tell me why a man like Lockhart would be implicated in murder?"

The medical examiner shrugged, opened his mouth to speak and left it that way, agape. The autopsy room was illuminated only by a strong lamp hung directly above the operating table. It winked out. McGrath reached toward his hip pocket.

"I WOULDN'T do that, Lieutenant," a soft voice came out of the darkness. "All I ask is that you stand against the wall. You, too, Doctor, and your assistant as well."

"Who are you?" the medical examiner croaked. "What do you want?"

There was no reply. Undercover of the inky darkness, the Bat worked furiously. He deftly inked the hands of the dead man, made impressions of

each finger on a white card and then wiped the fingers clean. Perhaps this corpse, with face completely unrecognizable, wasn't Lockhart's. The Bat intended to find out.

He moved toward the door; but none of the men in the room could see him doing it. Three minutes went by and the only sound was the hoarse breathing of the medical examiner and his assistant. McGrath was chewing the stub of a cigar, but he made no move to reach for his gun.

Then the light above the table suddenly flashed on. The medical examiner covered his eyes for a moment, accustomed them to the glare and then moved forward.

"Just take a look on the operating table, Doc," McGrath said quietly. "I think you'll find the image of a bat pasted there. Am I right?"

The medical examiner saw it as McGrath spoke. It was merely a small silhouette of a bat, wings outspread in full flight. This was the brand of the Black Bat.

"How did you know it was there?" he asked. "Who was that? He moved around in the darkness as though he could see."

"He can," McGrath answered glumly. "And how did I know that sticker was there? I'm psychic. Now let's see if we can figure out what the Bat wanted with the corpse."

While McGrath busied himself looking for clues, the Bat was upstairs in the darkened offices of the medical examiner's quarters. On the desk were the death certificates for Sloane and Collier. The Bat read them in the darkness as easily as if they'd been under a desk lamp. Then he found a more detailed report. It was brief but interesting.

> Strange contraction of the eye pupils indicating some myotic drug, but every teat fails to show presence of anything but the hydrocyanic acid that apparently caused death. Contents of stomach reveal that both men are a hearty meal an hour before death. Evidence of meat, potatoes, green beans and a tapioca dessert, and far from being digested. Poison was administered directly into a vein at the back of the neck. Needle penetrated slightly more than three centimeters and a full load of the hypo given. Only part of the drug was absorbed. Definitely a cleverly planned double murder.

THE BAT carefully replaced the papers, walked quietly toward the rear door and then paused. A telephone bell was ringing. He heard someone yawn, sigh and answer the phone.

"Falkner Building? What? Another suicide, huh? Okay, Officer, we'll be right up."

The Bat suddenly felt beads of perspiration from beneath his hood. The Falkner Building! Silk was there, making a quiet investigation. Was the morgue wagon being called to pick up his corpse?

CHAPTER IV
Hard to Handle

SILK left Quinn's house a full hour before his master departed. Had anyone been watching, he would never have recognized the valet. The man heading for the sidewalk was older than Silk, had curly gray hair and a short, mousy beard. He wore a black fedora, and a pair of glasses perched precariously on his nose lent an air to him. His white-edged vest, brown gloves and cane added to the picture. Silk knew how to disguise himself.

He walked to the corner, hailed a taxi by waving his cane and was driven to the business section. He paid off the driver, walked slowly along the street until he reached the entrance of the Falkner Building. He slipped inside unobtrusively, disdained the elevator and began methodically climbing the stairs.

This was the oddest case he'd ever seen the Black Bat handle. Even the Bat didn't know exactly what it was all about except that the danger was from a lethal spy ring. Collier, Sloane and Rigby had been murdered because they knew too much, Lockhart? Silk wasn't sure about him, but there was a vague notion in the back of his head that Lockhart either knew too much and was murdered or he had suddenly gone mad and leaped to his death.

Silk found that there was no stairway to the thirty-second floor. Prowling the corridor, he located the private elevator, got in and sent it up. He opened the door very softly and directly before him he spotted the office door labeled SOCIETY AMERICANA. It being night, the place was dark and deserted.

He fished a bunch of keys out of his pocket, studied the lock, and tried one key. It slid into the lock easily, but the bolt refused to turn, Silk frowned, dropped a hand on the knob and turned it. The door was already unlocked. He drew a gun from his hip pocket, thumbed off the safety and suddenly flung the door wide. Light from the hallway served to illuminate the room. Apparently no one lurked there.

Silk stepped into the room. He felt a faint breeze across the nape of his neck and he swung around quickly. There was an ugly looking Luger pistol three inches from his eyes. Behind it was a slender, well-dressed man who wore shell-rimmed glasses and a scowl that indicated he didn't like this intrusion.

"Drop the gun," he said, "Then walk over against the wall and sit down. I suppose you are soiling books or possibly giving demonstrations of a vacuum cleaner. You shouldn't use private elevators,

my stupid friend. That one in the corridor gives a signal in this office when it is being used. Now what do you want?"

Silk's glib tongue failed him for one of the few times in his life. There simply wasn't any logical excuse for his entering the office and the man with the gun didn't look as though he'd believe the truth if Silk were crazy enough to tell it. So Silk said nothing. He watched the man narrowly, looking for a chance to rush that gun.

THE man pulled a chair over in front of Silk and sat down himself. He had selected a straight-backed chair and he rocked slowly on its two hind legs.

"Then I must assume you are a thief and turn you over to the police," he said smoothly. "I would hate to do that, so why not tell me what brought you here?"

Silk wetted his lips. His right foot moved out a trifle, as though he were stretching it in an unconscious movement.

"I—" he began.

Then his right foot shot forward. The toe hooked under a round of the chair which the armed man occupied and he heaved. The resultant crash was ear-splitting in the silence of the building. The armed man went flying backward. His gun left his band and skidded into a corner. Silk dived for it. The door leading into another of the rooms opened. Two big men catapulted out, took in the situation at a glance and pounced on Silk.

He fought furiously for he had an idea that his life was at stake. One fist collided with a man's nose and drew blood, but that was the only blow Silk struck. Two huge hands circled his throat and squeezed. Above him the ceiling lights began to dance crazily. His lungs strained for air. He could feel those powerful fingers collapsing his windpipe, bending the bones in his throat. Silk suddenly went limp.

"Let the fool up!" the spectacled man ordered sharply. "Make no more noise than necessary. Fritz, step into the hall and keep your eyes open. He may not have been alone, and I must find out who he is and who sent him."

Silk was only dimly aware of being picked up and thrown down on the flat top of the sturdy table in the anteroom. His only advantage—and it may have been temporary—was that he had thrust the automatic under his vest before passing out. Somebody now slapped his face smartly, and he tried to open his eyes.

The angry leader, shaken and clothing awry, snarled at his assistants.

"Get back to your search in the committee room," he ordered. "I will attend to this fine fellow."

Silk managed to open his eyes sufficiently to watch the thugs hasten back into the other office. The glimpse he got of the chamber showed they had certainly been searching diligently for something. Every article of furniture had been opened or smashed and shoved around. A wall ventilator had been ripped away, the rug had been rolled up, curtains had been jerked down, and even a radiator had been broken from its base,

But Silk had little time for contemplation on this savage ruthlessness. His tormentor had drawn a suspicious looking flask from his pocket and was now pouring some of its contents into a small glass.

"Dumkopf that you are," he complained, "I have to waste this good Schnapps on you to bring you around for questioning. I—"

SILK figured this to be the right moment for his escape. As the man with the flask finished filling the tumbler, Silk snatched his gun from beneath his vest, hastily sat up, and fired at the bottle. The flask shattered into fragments, but the man was not without a certain resourcefulness. He dashed the contents of the glass straight into his prisoner's face.

This settled Silk and scuttled his chances. Blinded, he was swiftly disarmed and made secure.

"Now," panted the leader, thoroughly enraged, "before I let my men tear you apart, my wily friend, you tell me why you came here and who you are. *Shnell!"*

"I came here to look for the same thing you don't seem able to find," said Silk coolly, playing for time.

This statement galvanized his captor. "What? Who told you about the watch? How did you know what its secret is? Who are you?"

"You'd be surprised," said Silk, at last beginning to see a little through watery, burning eyes.

The other bit off a curse and called to one of his men.

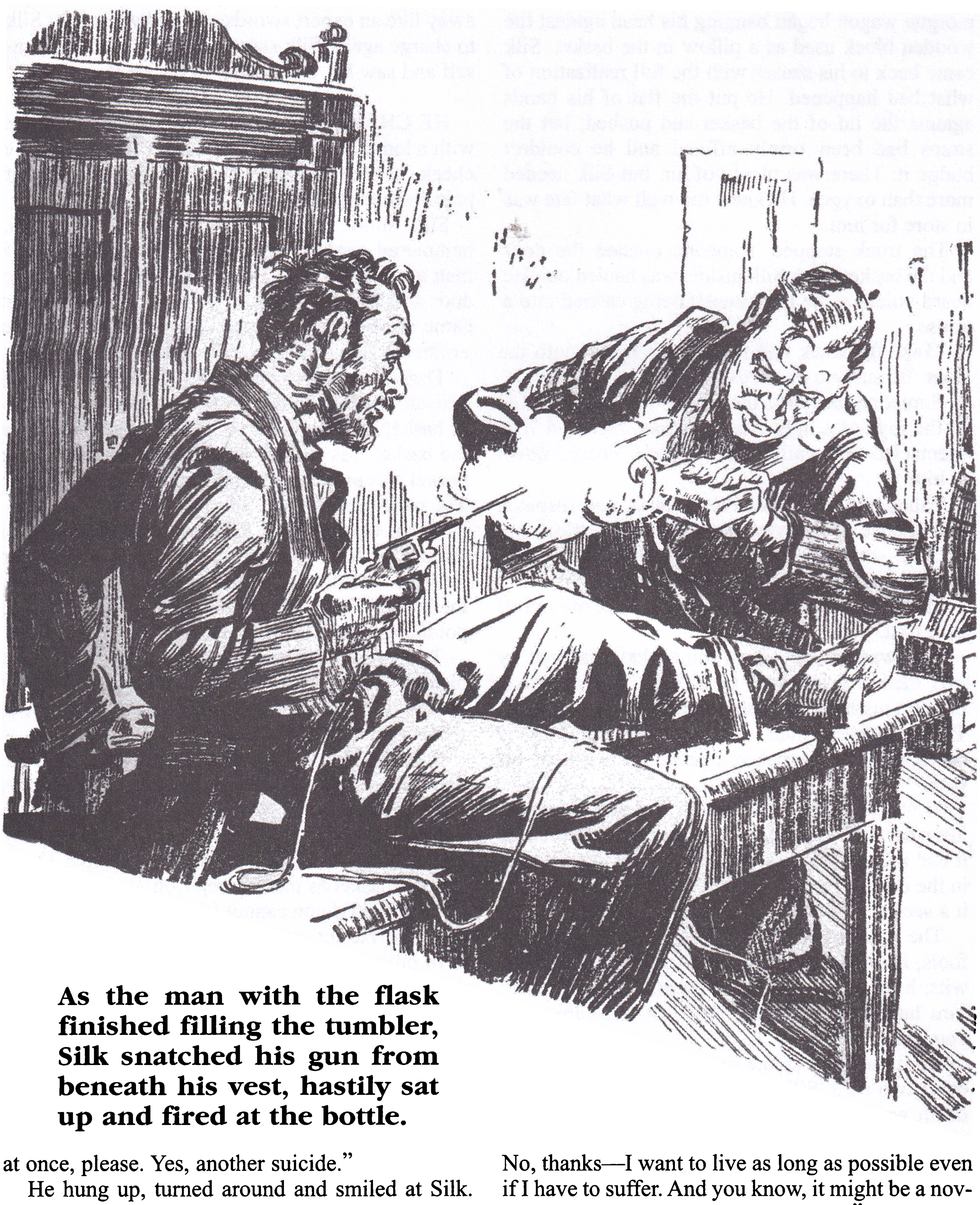
"This is no place to question this man. He knows something dangerous. If he came here to find the watch, perhaps others will come. Take him away."

"Of course, Excellency," the big man agreed. "But it will be difficult. We must do it so no one can suspect and try to stop us. Wait—I have it. Today I watched three men carried away from this building in a truck from the morgue. If we could get one of those—"

The spectacled man nodded eagerly. "Sometimes," he said, "you show that you were born with a few brains. Watch him!"

The spectacled man walked over to a phone, thumbled through the phone book and then dialed a number,

"This is Officer Grogan. There is a dead man in the Falkner Building—a suicide. You will send out



As the man with the flask finished filling the tumbler, Silk snatched his gun from beneath his vest, hastily sat up and fired at the bottle.

at once, please. Yes, another suicide."

He hung up, turned around and smiled at Silk. "You see, we are clever, too. When the truck from the morgue arrives, the attendants will carry the basket into the lobby. My men will be waiting. They will take the uniforms of the attendants, put you in the basket and carry you out. Simple, is it not? No one can possibly suspect that you are being kidnapped. Or perhaps you might prefer to talk here? I guarantee it would be easier if you did."

"Easier how?" Silk snorted. "You'd put a bullet through my skull maybe, instead of torturing me. No, thanks—I want to live as long as possible even if I have to suffer. And you know, it might be a novelty riding in a morgue wagon at that."

The spectacled man jerked his head to the left. One of his thugs grinned, stepped behind Silk and brought down his fist. Silk felt a terrific explosion and things turned black. He slumped out of the davenport onto the floor.

WHILE these three men worked with astonishing dispatch, Silk remained unconscious. He didn't recover consciousness until the jolting of the

morgue wagon began banging his head against the wooden block used as a pillow in the basket. Silk came back to his senses with the full realization of what had happened. He put the flat of his hands against the lid of the basket and pushed, but the straps bad been firmly affixed and he couldn't budge it. There was plenty of air, but Silk needed more than oxygen. He knew too well what fate was in store for him.

The truck stopped, someone opened the door and the basket, with Silk inside, was hauled out. He heard voices as he felt himself being carried into a house.

"Take the truck and run it off a bridge into the river. Be sure no one sees you do this."

Someone loosened the straps, and Silk blinked in the rays of a light directly above his head. The spectacled man called "Excellency" peered down at him.

"Shall we save ourselves trouble and dispatch you at once or will you, perhaps, talk a little?"

Stall—that was Silk's one hope for life. He did some rapid thinking in the next minute.

"I'll talk," he declared sullenly. "Let me out of here first."

Silk was hauled out of the basket, watched by two men and led over to a chair. He sat down, pressed his hand against his temples and groaned. The spectacled man stood above him, looking down with an unspoken question written on his face.

"I was after the watch," Silk said and wondered just what kind of a watch it was and what significance it had in this odd case. He determined to try a shot in the dark. "You don't think those other boys kept it a secret, do you?"

The spectacled man smiled smugly. "So those fools, Lockhart and his crew of super-patriotic nitwits, hired more than three agents. But no matter. You have chosen to defy us, lost miserably, and your fate is death!"

He turned and spoke in a foreign tongue to the other two men, Silk sensed that the manner of his death was being described. He couldn't afford to wait any longer. The next act might have an abrupt curtain so far as he was concerned. He suddenly came out of that chair like a catapult.

One of the bigger men made a lunge for him, but Silk avoided that like a weasel might slip around a charging elephant. He hit the spectacled man head on, drove him back against the wall and tried a short jab to the chin. This had to be finished fast, before the other two hulking brutes could gather together their wits and enter the action.

But the spectacled man was light on his feet and though he didn't pack much of a punch, he squirmed out of Silk's embrace, danced lightly away like an expert swordsman and waited for Silk to charge again. Silk started a lunge, checked himself and saw his victim leap to the right.

HE CHANGED his tactics promptly and let go with a long, looping right. It caught the man on the cheek, bobbed his head over and forced a cry of pain from his lips.

Silk forgot the other two men. He closed in, hammered another pair of jabs and then gave the man a violent shove. He whirled, streaked for the door and had his hand on the knob when a chair came down in a direct collision with his skull. He emitted a sigh as his knees buckled under him.

Dazed, but still conscious, Silk could offer no resistance when he was stuffed back into the wicker basket. He heard the straps draw tight, and then the basket was picked up and carried outside. The basket was propped up against the rear seat of a car. The motor roared, and Silk lost all hope.

Then, vaguely, Silk heard a shot. The motor of the car ceased roaring and dropped to a low purr. He heard the two hulking men start running toward the house. There was no mistaking their heavy feet pounding on the gravel driveway.

The spectacled man emerged from the house, pistol in hand. He directed a search of the premises that took fifteen minutes. There was no sign of whoever had fired that single shot.

"Bah," the spectacled man growled. "It was perhaps a hunter discharging his gun for the sake of hearing it explode. No one knows of this place. There can be no spying interlopers in the vicinity. Back to your work. Take that fool to the river. Throw into the basket as much scrap iron as you can find. Rock will do if you cannot find anything else. Then drop the basket and all into the river. Hurry—I have other work for you. Where's Freidrich? Why does he not come when I so order it?"

The two men trotted back to the car. One made sure the wicker morgue basket was still there and that someone was inside. They headed north on the highway, parked well off the road and beside a swiftly moving river. The basket was hauled out, dropped on the ground and the two men began accumulating a heap of good-sized rocks.

Finally one of them unstrapped the lid of the basket. In the darkness he could see only a shadowy form lying very still inside. They began dropping the rocks into the basket, half-covering their victim until they were sure enough weight had been added to keep the corpse on the river bottom for weeks.

One of the men was unable to resist the temptation of taunting his victim. "It is fitting," he said in a gruff, accented voice, "that you die like this. You even have a casket. Are we not kind to think of that?"

There was no reply. The big man reached inside the basket and seized his victim by the throat. He let go suddenly, pulled his bond back as though his fingers had touched molten steel. Something dripped off them.

"Himmel—blood! Otto—a match, quickly!"

The other spy scraped a match, held it high and for a moment both men were certain this must be some wild figment of a dream, The man who lay in the basket was Freidrich, the valet of his Excellency. There was a bullet hole directly between his eyes and pasted just above it was the black image of a bat, wings spread in flight.

CHAPTER V
McGrath Comes Close

WHEN the Bat heard that telephone call come in, he went into swift action. There was one sure way of checking on the corpse at the Falkner Building. He beat the morgue attendants to their wagon, opened the rear door and discovered that the inside of the truck consisted of two compartments. The wicker basket occupied one and above it was another space for a second victim. Only a rolled up stretcher occupied this niche. He hauled himself up, squeezed his bulk into this upper compartment and pulled the door shut after him. Half a minute later the truck rolled away.

There was no window in the rear door and the Bat could only pray that he was being taken to the right destination. Moments later, the basket was taken out and he had a glimpse of the busy street in front of the Falkner Building. He weighed the idea of slipping out and invading the offices of the Society Americana, but gave it up for two reasons. There was no crowd; there was no policeman in evidence. This looked like a trap of some sort.

Minutes went by and the Bat's limbs ached from being cramped up. Then the rear door opened again and the basket was slipped inside. The Bat glimpsed the faces of the men who handled it. He knew instantly what had happened. The real attendants had been disposed of and their places taken by a couple of killers. He wondered if Silk were inside the basket and if he was still alive. The Bat slipped the hood from over one side of his head, cocked his ear and listened. Faint, hoarse breathing reached his extraordinarily acute hearing organs. Whoever was in the basket lived.

This ride took the better part at an hour before the truck stopped. The Bat waited until the basket was hauled out and an intense silence fell. Then he slipped out himself, stretched for a few seconds and got his bearings. He was somewhere in a suburban section and behind a fairly good-sized single family dwelling, Lights blazed on the first floor,

He crept toward a window, raised his head cautiously and through heavy curtains that were parted only a crack, he had a fair view of the interior. His heart gave an exultant leap when he saw Silk alive and apparently bluffing his way along. The Bat still watched when Silk swung into action and was rapped on the head with a chair. To invade the place now would probably have been dangerous. There were four men in the room and all were well armed.

But from the moment that Silk crashed to the floor, the Bat's automatic was trained on the spectacled man, He watched Silk thrown into the wicker basket. Orders were being given two huge, apelike men. The Bat pressed his ear against the window and made out enough of the conversation to realize what was going on.

He slipped quietly back from the house. He heard a snarl, the sound of a heavy chain being dragged along the ground and then a dog barked viciously. Half a minute later the rear door opened and a man emerged, holding a gun in his fist. He called soothingly to the dog, but the animal had the Bat's scent and kept up his incessant baying. The man walked over to the beast, unhooked the chain and, gripping one end of it, let the dog pull him. The animal headed straight for the spot where the Bat was hiding.

With a sudden lunge the dog tore itself free of the man's grasp, gave a leap and sailed over a low bush. He saw the Bat's crouched form, snarled and attacked. As the vicious beast was hurtling through the air, the Bat hastily reversed his gun, holding it by the barrel. He brought it down in a hard blow that clipped the beast on the head. The dog crashed to the ground.

"YOU will not move!" a grating voice warned, and the Bat looked up into the gaping muzzle of a gun. "Stand erect and raise your hands. Drop your gun."

The Bat obeyed all the orders except the last one. He still held his automatic by the barrel. He sidestepped around the bush and light from one of the windows fell upon him. His captor gave an involuntary gasp of terror, for the Bat inspired fear. His rib-winged cloak gave him the illusion of being in flight.

Suddenly the Bat tossed his automatic into the air about two feet. As it came down, his hand snaked out, grasped it by the butt and his finger curled around the trigger. The man who had him covered gave a croaking shout and began to squeeze the trigger. But the Bat was faster. His gun blazed the split-second that it landed in his hand. A single bullet sped true. The man toppled without a sound.

Working fast, the Bat hoisted the man to one shoulder, made a dive into the underbrush that surrounded this house and was scampering toward the front when the other three occupants began their hunt. He saw the car parked, the motor running. The rear door was open and he spotted the wicker basket inside.

He sped toward the car, laid his burden down gently and hauled out the basket. He opened it, signaled the amazed Silk to be quiet and helped him out. They stuffed the dead man into the basket, replaced it in the back of the car and then faded away into the darkness. The man called "Excellency" bolted out of the house, drove a car out of the garage and vanished.

"I thought I was sunk that time," Silk panted. "I still can't understand how you found me."

The Bat laughed softly. "I was literally above you most of the time—in the upper compartment of the morgue wagon. But all this has got us nowhere. I don't even know who that spectacled man—who certainly seems to be important—can be. Did you learn, Silk?"

"They called him 'Excellency,' so he must be important," Silk said. "I did hear something else that's plain Greek to me so far. They tried to make me tell why I busted into the offices of the Society Americana. I saw that they had been searching the place so I said I came for the same thing they were looking for, and right away that smooth guy asked me how I knew about the watch. I don't know what watch they meant, so I shut up."

"A watch?" The Bat frowned, "It ties up, Silk. Rigby made a very peculiar statement to me just before he was killed. He said that all he'd learned so far was that pocket watches fly. It made no sense to me then—little more now. However, there is one thing we must do immediately. Tonight I got the fingerprints of the man who plunged to his death from the window of the Society Americana. We're going to invade Lockhart's residence and look for something that would normally bear his fingerprints."

Silk gaped. "Then you think, maybe, that Lockhart isn't dead? That the body which fell out of the window was somebody else?"

The Bat trudged along beside Silk, occasionally grabbing his arm and guiding him away from large rocks or stumps hidden by darkness that didn't exist to the Bat's eyes.

"Look, Silk," he said thoughtfully. "Sloane and Collier were murdered in a locked office. They had walked in under their own power, and therefore they were alive when the door was closed and locked by Detective Allen. Someone in that office must have killed them. How it was done, I don't know—yet. I've learned that two people are missing. One is Lockhart, who is supposed to be dead. The other is a man named Fisk who rushed out of the office and disappeared. Maybe he is the killer, but until I'm sure that it's Lockhart's body that is in the morgue, I'm not throwing away that angle. Better go into that farmhouse and phone Butch. Have him drive out as quickly as possible."

THE Bat begrudged the hour it took for Butch to put in an appearance. Things weren't moving rapidly in this case and he still hadn't the faintest idea as to what it was all about. Rigby's weird statement about flying watches and now Silk's astounding tale of a missing watch had some connection, but what did it mean? The manner of death suffered by the two men at the meeting of the Society was another element of mystery.

Like the medical examiner, the Bat couldn't fathom why two normally healthy men would permit hypodermic needles to be inserted into their necks without putting up some kind of an objection. Hydrocyanic acid works horribly fast, but not so rapidly as to prevent a victim from crying out in pain from the insertion of a needle. Fisk's disappearance complicated things, and the only information the Bat had on that subject was newspaper items.

Lockhart's battered head indicated that at least part of his wounds had been inflicted before he plunged to the sidewalk. The Bat had a well formed notion that once he got his teeth into this case, he'd still find it intensely difficult to solve. Men who can murder as these killers had done possessed, of necessity, an excellent knowledge of poisons and toxicology.

A car rolled at a moderate speed down the highway. Its headlights winked on and off occasionally, when the driver was sure no other cars were in sight. Behind the wheel was Butch O'Leary, his huge body pressed against the wheel, his battered hat far to the back of his head and his ample mouth slightly open.

Then he saw an eerie form emerge from the side of the road. Wings were outspread and Butch no longer wondered why he had seen killers quail before this apparition. Even Butch felt a thrill, and he knew the man who was concealed beneath that hood and cloak.

Butch braked to a stop; the Bat and Silk piled in, The Bat leaned forward.

"Nice work, Butch. Take us to Lockhart's house. It's on Longacre Road. Stop a block away. Let us out and then turn the corner and wait."

"Right you are, Boss," Butch said happily. "Been huntin'?"

"We bagged one bird and didn't even have time to find out what species he was." The Bat chuckled. "Before we're done, I think there will be good use for your fists, Butch. You'll be pitted against a

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couple of men as big as you."

Butch grunted in pleasure. "Just lemme at 'em, that's all I ask. I'll flatten both of 'em with one punch right on top of their skulls."

Butch drove well, covering the distance at a fast clip and yet attracting no attention from speed cops. He reached his destination, let the Bat and Silk out and then parked as ordered.

The Bat vaulted a hedge and landed on the front lawn of Lockhart's townhouse. Silk followed and they slipped forward cautiously. Only a dim hail light burned in the house since it was well after midnight.

HE TOUCHED Silk's arm. "Stay here and watch," he said. "I'll go inside. If anyone comes, throw some gravel against yonder window. I'll hear it even if I'm on the other side of the house."

The Bat crept up on the front porch. He listened intently, heard no signs of life and proceeded to force the door open with a slim piece of steel that left no merits when used by his skilled hands. He stepped into the hallway, saw stairs leading to the floor above and went up with no more noise than a hawk swooping down on its prey. His objective was Lockhart's bedroom. There he was bound to find plenty of objects that must bear the dead man's fingerprints.

He invaded the room quietly, needed no light to make his way about and stopped before a dresser upon which were several silver-backed brushes. He used one of Lockhart's silk handkerchiefs to wrap these in, entered a private bedroon, and appropriated three bottles containing, respectively, hair tonic, powder, and after shave lotion. These he also carefully wrapped. On a small bedside table he found a chrome-plated thermos jar and helped himself to this as well.

With his borrowed articles tucked under his cloak, he left the house as unobtrusively as he had entered. Silk joined him and they hurried to where Butch was parked. Ten minutes later they headed down the street toward Tony Quinn's home.

The Bat leaned forward suddenly. "Go right on by the house, Butch. You can't see it yet, but Lieutenant McGrath's car is parked in front. We've got to use our wits this time. He's found no one at home and I'm betting he's been parked there for a long time—ever since I taunted him a bit at the morgue. Butch, drop us around the corner. Then go to a phone booth. Better use one in a busy all-night store where nobody is apt to notice you. Phone Police Headquarters, say you're the Bat and leave a message to the effect that you're very sorry for the trick you pulled on McGrath tonight."

"Right, Boss," Butch said.

He turned the corner and the Bat and Silk hopped out. As they headed toward the gate near the garden house, the Bat stripped off his hood and robe, rolled them into a bundle around Lockhart's personal toilet articles. He handed this to Silk.

"Use the tunnel. Get into the house and take your clothes off. Climb into your pajamas and say you were asleep and didn't hear McGrath knocking. Disconnect the doorbell if you have time. You don't know what happened to me. Step on it, Silk."

Silk darted into the garden house, raised a cleverly hidden trapdoor and slid down a ladder to the tunnels. Tony Quinn, no longer the Bat now, picked an old, discarded cane from a corner of the garden house. A film seemed to gather over his eyes and he became apparently blind once more. He heard someone plowing through brush and he stepped out of the garden house, tapping his cane in front of him.

"Who is there?" he called out. "Who is it? What do you want?"

McGRATH turned a flashlight full on Tony Quinn's face, but even that sudden change of light didn't make Quinn blink. He didn't even seem to notice it and his eyes were turned in another direction.

"Hello, Tony Quinn," McGrath said mockingly, and his face was drawn in harsh lines. "Been out for quite some time, haven't you? By chance is it possible that you included the City Morgue in your nocturnal ramble a couple of hours ago and stuck a gun in my face?"

"Lieutenant McGrath," Quinn sighed, visibly relaxing. "You gave me quite a start. I thought for a moment you might be a burglar. What did you say about a gun and the City Morgue?"

"Where," McGrath demanded, "is that slinky, bald-headed butler of yours? Why doesn't he answer the door? I'll tell you why. Because he hasn't been home, either. He's been out helping you and he's still out. All I hope is that he slipped in through the front door. I tied a piece of thread across it and I'll know if he got in all right. Looks like it's all up with you, Mister Black Bat."

Quinn put out a friendly, groping hand and found McGrath's shoulder. The light still glared in his face, but his eyes were filmed and unblinking.

"Lieutenant," he said in a mildly remonstrative voice, "I really don't know what you're talking about. I've been sitting in the garden house for well over an hour. My valet felt indisposed and went to bed. Won't you come in?"

"You bet I will," grated the lieutenant.

McGrath automatically took Quinn's arm when he stumbled over a length of garden hose. Doubts still lurked in McGrath's mind. If Quinn wasn't blind, the glare of the flashlight should have made him turn away. He shouldn't have tripped over the hose for it was in plain view even in the darkness lying like a thick black serpent across the cement driveway. Quinn led him to the rear door; used a key to open it and went inside.

"Norton," he called out in a loud voice. "Norton, where the devil are you?"

There was no answer. Quinn gripped McGrath's arm. "Something must have happened to him. His room is to the left of the butler's pantry. Hurry—please!"

McGrath flung open the door of Silk's room, snapped on the lights and stared at the bed. Silk was just sitting up, rubbing his eyes and he looked as though he had been roused out of a sound sleep.

"Norton, are you there? Are you all right?" Quinn asked and had to repress an urge to grin. Silk was a perfect actor.

"Why didn't you answer the door?" McGrath growled savagely.

Silk paid no attention to either of them until he turned his head their way and then he stared up in amazement. He cocked his head to one side.

"What? Did you say something? I—oh—sorry, sir. Just a moment. I put these in to keep out the noise. My head was splitting."

He removed a pair of ear stoppers, placed them carefully on his dresser and donned a robe.

McGrath snorted, sped to the front door and opened it. He waved his hand through what seemed to be thin air and felt the black silk thread break. He slammed the door hard and turned around to face Quinn.

"It seems I'm always wrong," he growled. "I'll admit I did see lights go on and off a couple of times, but I figured you had some kind of a setup arranged to take care of that. I—"

HERE the phone buzzed and Silk answered it. He handed the instrument to McGrath, "For you, sir."

McGrath almost barked into the transmitter. Then he listened and hung up with a crash of metal.

"Well," he said with a sigh, "when I'm wrong, I'm the first to admit it. The Bat just called Headquarters and left a message for me. Therefore he can't be you—eh, Quinn? You know this Black Bat has plenty of good qualities. He never permits anyone to take the blame for something he's done. Those little stickers he leaves around brand his deeds. Well, I'll run along."

Silk picked up McGrath's hat and presented it with a flourish. As McGrath went out, Silk pressed the doorbell button. There was no response.

"I see now why I didn't hear your ring, sir. Something must have happened to the bell."

McGrath jammed on his hat and left. Silk closed the door, leaned against it and drew the sleeve of his robe across his forehead.

"Close, sir. Closer than I like to think. One of these days McGrath will trap you. He's getting smarter."

Quinn walked into his study, lit a cigarette and sat down in his accustomed chair before the fireplace. "You know, Silk, he keeps my wits sharply tuned. And I think he rather enjoys the little game, himself."

Silk placed an ash tray handy and grinned. Then he sobered. "McGrath said something about lights being turned on and off. I didn't do that, sir. Someone must have been here."

Quinn's cigarette fell to the floor as he arose with a jerk. Then the secret door of his laboratory opened a crack. Silk reached for a heavy candlestick holder as a weapon. But he put it down again a moment later. Framed in the doorway was a girl, smiling broadly and extending both hands toward Quinn.

"Carol!" Quinn said happily.

Carol let him take her hands.

"It's I," she admitted. "I got Silk's call to stand by. Butch was summoned and I wondered what was going on, so—I took a little walk. Lo and behold, I saw Lieutenant McGrath drive up and almost push his finger through the doorbell. I slipped around the estate, used the tunnel and got in the house. I turned lights on and off a couple of times to alibi Silk and you, Tony."

Quinn said nothing for a few moments, content to look down into her sparkling eyes.

CHAPTER VI
Grenade Trap

TWENTY minutes later Carol, Quinn and Silk were in the secret laboratory. Quinn carefully dusted the various articles he had taken from the Lockhart home. Fingerprints came out, finely etched by the powder. Using a powerful magnifying glass, Quinn studied them. Then he turned to the card which bore the prints of the dead man in the morgue, the man who had fallen or leaped from the window of the Society Americana and had been tentatively identified as Lockhart.

"As I thought," he said, looking up, "*the fingerprints are different*. Lockhart, in the privacy of his home, left his prints around. But these do not match those I took from the fingers of the corpse. Therefore it obviously was not Lockhart's body that hurtled to the sidewalk. Lockhart must be alive—which means he knows something."

"I think he's the head of this spy ring," Silk put in. "But I sure wish I knew what he's up to. So far we've been working in the dark too much and whatever they're doing, we haven't impeded the spies very much."

Quinn nodded and glanced at his watch. "It's two A.M.," he said. "A few more hours of darkness. Get my things ready, Silk. I'm going out alone this time because I don't believe this particular job will be dangerous. I'm going to have a little talk with Fouquet and Brooks—the two surviving men of the committee who were present when Sloane and Collier died. I'm particularly interested in getting some line on Fisk, who has disappeared, and on Lockhart, who seems to be dead and isn't. Carol, be ready for trouble. Once I get a definite lead, I'm sure there will be work for you."

Quinn drew on his cape and hood, thrust two automatics into specially designed pockets in his black suit and with a nod to Carol and Silk, slipped through the entrance to the tunnel and vanished. He discovered that Butch had located and returned the cheap coupé which Quinn had left near the morgue. He got behind the wheel and chose quiet, deserted side streets to travel far uptown toward the home of Pierre Fouquet.

The house was shrouded by darkness. He attacked the rear door after making certain it wasn't wired to an alarm system. Entering with his usual skill, he crossed the kitchen, passed through a butler's pantry and reached a spacious reception hall. He slipped up the stairway to the bedrooms, investigated two of them before he found the one occupied by Fouquet. Grimly approaching the bed, he had his gun ready to menace Fouquet and prevent any impulsive outcry.

The Bat touched the shoulder of the well covered sleeping man, but Fouquet didn't awaken. He shook him hard and then noticed that Fouquet lay on his stomach and that there was a big bulge in the covers just below his shoulders. The Bat's blood ran icy cold as he pulled the covers down. A gruff ejaculation indicated his surprise. Fouquet was dead! A knife had been driven hilt deep into his back. He probably died without ever knowing what had happened.

"If Fouquet was murdered, then Hugh Brooks' life is in danger, also. Perhaps the lawyer, Durrance, will be threatened, too, because he was present at that last meeting," the Bat told himself grimly.

He took no time to look for clues. Instead he bolted out of the house, raced to his car and jumped in. Hugh Brooks' home was only a few blocks away, Durrance lived clear across town. The Bat vaulted a hedge that enclosed Brooks' estate, ran lightly up on the front porch and peered through the big, wide windows looking into the living room.

Although that room was dark, the Bat's supersensitive eyes clearly distinguished everything in it. He noticed that chairs had been carelessly shoved back and that a vase of flowers had been overturned on a library table. The water still dripped onto the rug.

HE waited to see no more. He grabbed up a porch chair, swung it and crashed a window. He pulled out pieces of glass, moved the lock and opened the window. As he slipped through, he heard rapid footsteps of at least three men racing down the stairs; The Bat's both hands moved fast, whipped out his guns and when the first man barged into the living room with spitting weapon, the Bat was prepared. Both guns blared. The man doubled up with a screech of pain and fell headlong on the floor.

Other guns roared, A bullet streaked by the Bat's head, buried itself in the wall an inch behind him and showered his hood with plaster. He fired another salvo from his two automatics, aiming at the thick velvet drapes that masked each side of the doorway. One of the drapes moved, billowing out like a balloon being inflated. Then a man's form hit the floor. He rolled sluggishly over just once and didn't move again.

A dark form bolted from behind the other curtain and began racing upstairs. The Bat was after him in a flash. Once the fleeing man fired over his shoulder, but he was hindered by the darkness through which the Bat was hardly visible. The bullet missed by a good three feet. The Bat could have shot this man down easily for darkness meant nothing to his eyes. However, he held his fire. He wanted to take this man alive.

The Black Bat triggered both guns at the man behind the drapes.

At the top of the stairs the running man veered sharply to the left, let out a wild yell of warning and darted into one of the bedrooms. The Bat heard glass break, but he kept on going. He had to find Brooks.

A streak of flame from the muzzle of a gun ripped through the night. The Bat returned the fire and heard someone duck back into one room, slam the door and hastily lock it. Without the slightest hesitation the Bat flitted by the door, stopped and edged back. He put the muzzle of one gun against the lock, blew it to pieces and pushed the door wide open.

Someone moaned feebly inside. Fresh, cool night air swept across the Bat's hooded face. His eyes penetrated the gloom, saw Hugh Brooks lying across the bed, his wrists and ankles lashed to the springs. There was no one else in the room.

The Bat raced toward the window, looked out and saw two shadowy forms running madly toward the rear of the estate. Then he turned back to Brooks, made a quick examination and saw that he had been subjected to torture by the knife. The sadistic artist had slashed fine lines across his chest and abdomen. The Bat quickly released the victim. Brooks sat up with a groan, clutched at the Bat's arm and tried to see what his rescuer looked like. The Bat reached over and turned on a light.

Brooks started back in renewed terror at the sight of a man hooded and caped in somber black. The Bat spoke in a slow, soothing voice to Brooks.

"Don't be afraid of me. I've come to help and it looks as though I arrived just in time. Mind if I use your telephone a moment?"

"Who—who are you?" Brooks asked. He was quickly regaining the cool composure that characterized him. "Whoever you are, I'm very grateful. In another moment those men would have driven a knife into my heart."

THE Bat dialed a number. "I'm the Black Bat," he told Brooks while he waited for the connection to be completed. Then a sleepy voice answered at the other end of the wire. The Bat asked "Durrance? I'm a friend. A few moments ago Fouquet was murdered and Hugh Brooks was almost killed. I have reason to believe that you may be next on the list. If you have a gun, get it and watch yourself. I'll explain everything shortly. When you hear a knock on your front door— four quick raps, two longer ones and then one fast one again—you will know it is me, the Black Bat!"

The Bat hung up and grinned behind his mask. Hugh Brooks stared at him as though he were a ghost.

"So you're the Bat," he finally managed. "I understood you were some kind of a great criminal, but I'll never believe that again. I owe my life to you."

"I've got to talk fast," the Bat said. "What did those men want to know?"

Brooks lit a cigarette with steady hands. "The oddest thing, Bat. They insisted that I knew what happened to a watch. They subjected me to some rather ghastly torture until one of them, a big fellow with glasses, decided that I was telling the truth when I denied any knowledge of a watch. He had just ordered my death when that window crashed downstairs. I—say, you didn't see anything of a couple of thick-set men around, did you? Joe Allen's detective agency was supposed to be guarding me. All of us on the committee have guards."

The Bat hurried into the hallway, stood at the top of the stairs and motioned Brooks, who had followed, to be very quiet. His acute ears heard the sound of hoarse breathing. He raced down the stairs, stepped up to a wardrobe in the hall and found that it was locked. The key was on the outside and he opened it. Two bound and gagged figures rolled onto the floor.

"There they are," the Bat told Brooks. "I'll leave them for you to work on. Better see that they keep their eyes open from now on. And get some medical attention for your chest."

The Bat left via the front door and drove straight to Durrance's home. Like the others, this house told of wealth and influence. There was a spacious yard in front and a veritable estate at the rear. Lights were on all over the place. The Bat stepped upon the front porch, rapped the signal on the door and waited.

A bolt clicked and he heard the sound of rapidly retreating feet. He turned the door knob carefully, pushed the door open about an inch and felt a very light pressure against it. He frowned, wondered what this could be and where Durrance was. He put his foot against the panel, gave the door a hard shove and then his brain clicked.

He gave a single leap that carried him off the porch and into a neatly trimmed bush. As he hit the ground, the whole front of the house seemed to be hurled out at him. There was a terrific explosion and a wave of flame and smoke. Debris fell all around him. A thick chunk of wood slapped down against his spine and made him gasp in pain. When he got to his feet cautiously, he found a fire raging in what was left of the front hall.

ONLY the Bat's quick action had saved his life. As the door was flung wide from his kick, he had glimpsed a hand grenade tied to a chair with a cord hooked to its pin and leading to a thumbscrew inserted in the wall. The other end of the cord was

attached to the door so that when it opened, the cord would automatically tighten and draw the firing pin. It was a neat, deadly trap.

No one but Durrance had known the Bat was to come calling, knew the prearranged signal and would slip back the bolts in answer to it.

He heard excited voices from neighboring houses, but he didn't run for it yet. It was possible Durrance might have been already threatened when the Bat reached him by phone. If he was a prisoner in this house, he'd be doomed, for fire was rapidly sweeping through the place. Protected somewhat by his hood and cape, the Bat plunged into the flames, negotiated a path across the shattered floor of the hall and ran up the stairs to the second floor. His nostrils quivered. Above the smell of the smoke he detected the pungent odor of gasoline. The house had been turned into a firetrap.

Above the rapidly increasing crackle of flame he heard a pounding against the upstairs floor. Unerringly he located the room from which it came, darted inside and saw a burly man, trussed up and gagged. He lay on the floor and there was a bloody welt across his forehead.

The Bat quickly untied him. When he ripped away the gag, the prisoner tried to speak, but his tongue was swollen and his mouth too dry for speech. He bobbed his head in a gesture of thanks even though his eyes betrayed a lurking terror at the sight of this grim black-robed figure.

"Anyone else in the house?" The Bat demanded. "Is Durrance here?"

The man tried to talk again and reverted to a vigorous negative shake of his head.

"Get downstairs as fast as you can," the Bat ordered. "Don't try to reach the front door. Use the rear! Hurry!"

As the man turned away, his coat opened and the Bat saw a glimpse of a nickle-plated badge. This, then, was another of Joe Allen's private detective operatives.

Sirens were whining outside and in a few moments it would be dawn. The Bat had little time to waste. He yanked open dresser drawers at random, looking for some kind of a clue that would attest Durrance's innocence or guilt.

Suddenly, above the confusion outside and the ever-mounting crackle of flame, he heard the distinct report of a gun. It was followed by a scream and then another shot. The Bat raced to a window overlooking the rear of the estate. He saw a dark figure sprawled out on the lawn. The Bat raised the window, climbed out to a small, deeply slanted roof and slid down it. He checked his descent by digging his heels into the gutter drain.

Then he carefully lowered himself. Dangling four feet above the ground, he glanced down to see what he'd land on. Something smashed against the metal drain pipe and the bark of the same gun reached his ears. Now he was the target for the hidden assassin. He let go, dropped to the ground.

NO MORE bullets menaced him and he had a weapon in his own fist. He stopped beside the sprawled figure, knelt and made a brief examination. It was the private detective he had freed. The man was quite dead. One bullet had plowed through his chest, the other had caught him directly between the eyes.

The Bat heard heavy footsteps coming around the side of the house. He made a flying leap for the protection of the dark bushes and crouched there. Then, slowly and carefully, he edged a path around the house, describing a very wide arc to avoid detection by the firemen who swarmed all over the place and the police who were engaged in dragging the corpse of the private detective to a much safer spot.

Someone in a light dressing gown and white pajamas ran up the walk. Despite the confusion and the flickering, deceptive light from the flaming house, the Bat recognized this man. It was Hugh Brooks!

CHAPTER VII

Hugo—the Poisoner

MID-AFTERNOON the following day, Silk awoke Tony Quinn by shaking him vigorously.

"Police Commissioner Warner and another man have just arrived," he warned. "There goes the doorbell now."

Quinn hastily jumped out of bed, sent Silk downstairs to stall his visitors while he donned his baggy tweeds. He brushed his teeth, combed his hair and picked up his cane. His eyes, which had been so sparkling and alive, became filmy and staring after the manner of the blind. He tapped his cane on the floor, went down the stairs gripping the banister tightly and entered his study.

Commissioner Warner, a lithe, handsome man who didn't look his fifty-odd years, hurried over to him, took Quinn's arm and piloted him to his accustomed chair in front of the fireplace. Quinn's eyes stared blankly into space, but he was studying the second visitor intently enough. He proved to be about Warner's age and there was a deep, worried furrow written on his forehead,

"Tony," Warner said, "I want you to meet Michael Igoe who is head of a specially created counterespionage division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation."

Quinn extended a hand blindly. Igoe shook it

and then sat down by Quinn's side. He spoke in a calm, unemotional voice.

"Mr. Quinn, Commissioner Warner accompanied me here to vouch for me. You were visited by Rigby, who used to work under me and was a very competent man. I think that hit-and-run driver who killed him committed cold-blooded murder to silence Rigby. I have thought so doubly, since two other of my former agents were murdered.

"You must know all about this, for the newspapers have made quite a field day of it. I also know that Lieutenant McGrath questioned you, but Warner tells me there is a certain animosity between you and McGrath—that he has some silly idea you are the Black Bat. I wish to Heaven you were. We could use a man like that in this particular case. What I want to know is what Rigby told you before he died. Why did he come here?"

Quinn's blank, unwinking eyes stared about two feet to the left of the federal agent. There was a slight smile on his scarred face. "I held nothing back from McGrath. Rigby and I handled a spy case several years ago. There was a murder involved and I took jurisdiction. The spy killers were sent to the electric chair and the case ended there. Rigby wondered if one of those men hadn't mentioned something to me that would give him a lead in connection with his present investigation. Unfortunately, they didn't."

Igoe's shoulders drooped. "Our last resort," he told Warner. "We're stumped completely. Where it will all wind up no one can foresee, but if, by some chance, this country should become mixed up in war, we'd be terribly menaced. Those spies know as much as we do." He paused and eyed Warner with an open question in his eyes. Warner nodded. Igoe continued.

"The plans of the industrial mobilization so carefully planned by the War Department have been stolen. With them, the spy ring can plan far ahead, prepare their saboteur, and create havoc."

Tony Quinn whistled softly. "The Industrial Mobilization Plans? It is serious, Mr. Igoe."

Commissioner Warner arose, put a friendly hand on Quinn's shoulder and looked down at him. "What you have been told is, of course, in the strictest confidence, Tony. I informed Mr. Igoe that you could be implicitly trusted. But how I wish McGrath was right about you. That you were The Black Bat. There is so much he could do, unhampered by red tape and laws. There is Fisk to be found. Last night Durrance vanished after part of his house was blown up by a bomb and the rest of it gutted by fire."

TONY Quinn's expression did not change. "If I were the Bat," he said calmly, "I should certainly do what I could. This is a matter for any right-minded citizen to take part in if he can. However—"

Quinn spread his hands in a gesture of despair. Igoe arose, and Silk bobbed up to show them out. Silk returned to the library to find Quinn tapping his fingers against the arms of his chair.

"Warner more than suspects I am the Bat," he said quietly. "This visit was only to apprise me that the Bat would be given every aid if he would help. Igoe came merely to back up the idea. As if I needed any persuasion. Silk, we've got to locate this spy ring. To do so we must contact some member of the outfit. I have an idea how it can be done. Draw the shades and bring me that book on toxicology."

Silk obeyed the orders promptly. For more than an hour Quinn studied the massive volume, making notes from time to time. Then he slammed the book shut, settled back in his chair and nodded in satisfaction,

"Silk, I think I know how those two agents were murdered in the offices of the Society Americana. It has been my belief that they did not die of hydrocyanic acid poisoning. When those needles were thrust into their veins, they were already dead. The blood was still fluid enough to take up part of the poison and an autopsy, unless done with another idea in mind, would indicate that they died of this poison. In fact, Silk, I believe those two men were already marked with death when they walked into the meeting."

"Walked in—dead?" Silk gasped.

"Practically that. I read the report of the medical examiner who performed the autopsies. He recorded that he found hydrocyanic acid—enough to cause instant death. There his work stopped because he discovered what he was looking for. But he also indicated that the pupils of the victims' eyes were practically non-existent. There is one poison which will act that way—*physostigma.*

"There is nothing more deadly and a pinhead amount would kill instantly. The ensuing death is gentle and the victim knows nothing—isn't even aware that he is dying. He falls into a coma and the pupils of his eyes rapidly contract. Any ordinary tests for poisons wouldn't show up that drug. The medical examiner made a natural error in nut going beyond his initial findings. And *physostigma* is very difficult to detect."

"But how does that lead us to a member of the spy ring?" Silk queried.

"Both agents had eaten a meal just before they died. Both had tapioca for dessert. Now, if a tiny capsule of soluble gelatine could have been mixed with the dessert, they'd have swallowed it unconsciously. If such a capsule were filled with that drug—both men would die very quietly and peacefully when the capsules dissolved in their

stomachs. The hypodermic administration of the hydrocyanic acid was only meant to throw an investigation off the trail. If we can find out where those agents ate that last meal, we may find the poisoner still there. That's your job, Silk. Hop to it—and be careful."

Silk obeyed those orders with alacrity. He never questioned Quinn's inductive reasoning, because it was nearly always amazingly accurate. He disguised himself enough to get by, attended the ceremonies at a funeral chapel where both agents reposed in state, and his glib tongue wangled information out of everyone who would talk. He learned that both agents had been in the habit of dropping into a modest little restaurant only a few blocks from the Falkner Building. Silk went there for supper and ordered tapioca for dessert.

"Sorry, sir," the waiter told him. "It isn't on the menu."

SILK looked up with an annoyed grimace. "But I had some here just a couple of days ago. I like it and, well, I figured there might be some left."

"I'll see," came the quick reply. "We did serve it day before yesterday."

To Silk's relief none remained. He wondered if he could have eaten a dish of it, knowing that two men had died mysteriously after partaking of the same dessert.

"Too bad," he said. "By the way, what's happened to that waiter who served me that day? We had quite a talk. It seems we both come from the same province in Germany."

The waiter tapped his pencil against the side of his nose. Then he smiled. "You must mean Hugo. Pffiefer was his last name. A little man who never spoke much. I'm surprised he opened up to you, sir. He wasn't with us very long and he quit that same day. Didn't even give a reason."

Silk could barely restrain his delight. The Bat's theory was working perfectly.

"I wonder," he asked, "if you could give me his address? He knew some relatives of mine in Prussia."

The waiter disappeared for a few moments, returned and laid a slip of paper on Silk's table. "There it is, sir. He still lives there because the manager sent one of the men over this morning to see if he wanted to come back to work. Hugo nearly bit his head off. He's got a nasty temper."

Silk folded a five dollar bill into the waiter's palm and realized he was getting something very cheap. It was night when he emerged to the street. He entered a busy drugstore, dialed Quinn's number and made a brief report.

"Wait on the corner near Hugo's house," the Bat ordered. "I'll pick you up. Be sure no one spots you."

Silk saw the Bat's cheap coupé rolling down the quiet neighborhood street and signaled it. The Bat stopped and Silk got in. Quinn swiftly pulled his hood over his head, passed an automatic to Silk and then drove around the corner.

"It's a boarding house," Silk reported. "Just a cheap place. Fire escape leads up the back."

"The whole place may be a spies' nest," the Bat said. "We'll have to handle this very carefully. And remember, this Hugo is a murderer with a killer's conscience and worries. He won't hesitate to kill again. See if you can hire a room. If the landlady doesn't chase you away the place ought to be on the level. I'll wait within watching distance. If you get a room, turn the lights out and then raise and lower the curtain twice. If possible, see if you can find out which is Hugo's room."

Silk nodded eagerly and walked back to the house. Minutes passed before the Bat saw lights go on in one room and then, after a brief interval, go out. Then the curtain was raised twice in the signal. Anyone else wouldn't have been able to observe this, but the Bat's eyesight wasn't that of an ordinary person. He saw that Silk had wisely selected a room overlooking the fire escape.

The Bat slipped through an adjoining yard, climbed a fence without making a sound and mounted the fire escape. He tapped lightly on Silk's window and he was instantly admitted.

"Hugo's room is directly across the hall," Silk reported, extending an envelope. "This was under his door. He's not home yet."

THE Bat took the envelope which bore a special delivery stamp. He studied the handwriting on the outside. Then he drew a very sharp, thin blade from his pocket, inserted it beneath the flap and gently sliced the letter open.

Two one-thousand-dollar bills flattered to the floor. That was all there was in the envelope.

"Blood money," the Bat whispered. "Hugo's pay for killing two men. Now I'm sure we're on the right track. Silk, there's pen and ink over on that table. Do you think you could copy this handwriting so Hugo wouldn't notice any discrepancies?"

Silk looked at the handwriting and laughed softly, "I put out some fancy kites in my day. Forged checks to you, sir. I can do it."

He sat down, worked swiftly until he had mastered his task and then took the Bat's dictation.

> Hugo,
>
> We pay you one-half of the promised money because we feel your work was simple and did not involve you in any danger. Perhaps we shall soon have another job for you and make up the amount deducted from this sum.

"How will I sign it?" Silk asked.

"We can't use a name. The spies probably wouldn't anyhow. To give the thing a ring of authenticity just sign it 'Seig Heil'!"

Silk folded the letter. The Bat took it, carefully wiped every portion of the paper with a handkerchief to remove fingerprints and with his own gloved hands he refolded it, inserted one of the thousand-dollar notes and resealed the flap expertly.

"A fair job," he told Silk. "I'm banking on the fact that little Hugo will be so mad when he reads it that he won't pay much attention to the envelope. I'm also hoping he'll see red and head for the men who hired him to commit murder. It's our only chance. Shove the letter back under his door."

Both men sat in silence for more than two hours before someone pounded up the stairs and stopped in front of Hugo's door. The Bat heard a slight grunt as Hugo bent down to pick up the envelope. Then the door closed.

Two minutes later it opened again and the same footsteps raced down the stairs. Silk was after the man in a flash, while the Bat slipped out the window, down the fire escape and ran back to where his car was parked. He turned around, rolled down the street in front of the boarding house and saw Silk nervously pacing the walk. The Bat stopped and Silk piled in.

"He got aboard a bus. Turn left and you can't miss it," he said.

The Bat picked up the trail quickly. Hugo seemed so enraged at the gypping he had received that he gave no thought to the possibility of pursuit. He got off the bus at the end of the line and hailed a taxi. Now the trail led far beyond the city limits and over a lane with deep ruts. They watched Hugo dismiss the cab and start walking briskly along.

"There is only one house at the end of this lane," the Bat said. "Take the car, Silk. Get Butch and bring him here as quickly as possible! Watch the place. If anything happens, tell Butch there's no limit to using his muscles and his fists. Keep your gun ready and don't stop to apologize before you start shooting."

CHAPTER VIII
Siege

NORTON slid behind the wheel, turned the coupé and headed back. The Bat merged into the darkness, picked a path across pastureland and made for the isolated house from the rear. He had vivid memories of watchdogs and he made certain none were kept on these premises before he crept up to the house and crouched beneath a window. He could hear loud voices and the banging of a fist against a table. The Bat risked a quick glance through the window.

Hugo was there, his face suffused by rage. He waved the thousand-dollar bill under the nose of a man the Bat already knew. He was the spectacled individual who had captured Silk and ordered his death.

"You stupid swine!" this man shouted to be heard above Hugo's impassioned tones. "This is a trick. We placed two bills in that envelope and no letter. You have been trailed here. You have failed us so miserably and there is only one penalty!"

Hugo's reddened face suddenly grew pale. He dropped the thousand-dollar bill on the table and backed away. There were four other men in the room. Hugo wasn't watching them. His eyes riveted on the spectacled man, who gave a covert signal. One of the other spies quietly left the room for a moment and returned, holding a pillow against his chest. Hugo, his back against the wall, was pleading for another chance. No one else spoke.

Suddenly the man with the pillow sprang forward. He pushed the pillow against Hugo's chest. There was a dull explosion that couldn't be heard far beyond the house. Hugo's wild pleas ended abruptly. A dazed look came into his eyes. Then he slowly slid down against the wall, one hand clawing at his chest just over the heart. Blood welled out between his fingers. Hugo died as he had lived—by violence.

Then, suddenly, the back and front doors of the house opened and erupted men. The Bat estimated that there were about a dozen. All had been probably waiting for a signal from their leader. They spread out with military precision. The Bat felt his heart thump violently. He hadn't expected this. Flight perhaps, or a quick dousing of lights. These men adopted unexpected and dangerous tactics instead. *They were surrounding their own hideout.*

Gradually they closed in although four lurked near the lane watching it. The Bat was trapped. He saw now that all brush and trees had been removed from around the house so that it was impossible to find any shelter. So long as he remained in the shadows he had a fair chance, but these men were methodically coming closer and examining every foot of ground, They were bound to spot him—and soon. Here, in the open, he wouldn't stand a chance.

The Bat waited no longer. The window above his head was low. He could have climbed through it in a split-second if it had been open. Nevertheless he had to take a chance. He held his guns in both hands. He straightened up suddenly, struck a blow against the window pane and shattered it. He hoisted himself up, heedless of the sharp edges of glass that ripped his clothing. Guns began to bark. Bullets plowed into the sides of the house, dangerously close. Then he was inside.

HE saw one man bolt into the room, shooting as he came. The Bat's guns exploded with twin roars and jets of flame. The man went down, his gun flying from his hand. The Bat stepped beside the window, saw four or five of the spies rushing toward the house and blazed away at them. The fusillade of lead sent them scurrying back where there was some semblance of cover. The Bat hastily doused the lights, ran into the hallway and heard the front door slam shut just as he entered. Through a small glass window set high in the door he saw a man running madly away. It was the spectacled leader of these spies.

The Bat locked the door and then raced upstairs. There was no time to make an examination of the house and he had a well founded suspicion that he was alone, anyway. He ran to a window, saw four of the men slinking close and winged two shots over their heads. Instantly a salvo of gunfire broke out and bullets chopped holes in the already shattered glass, thudded into the walls and forced the Bat to duck out of the way. He smiled wryly under his hood. The besieged had become the besiegers. He was one against many desperate men.

Then he groaned aloud. At any moment Silk and Butch might come barging into the fray. There was no way by which they'd know the Bat was inside the house until they were too close to realize their mistake. Those four men, waiting in case reinforcement appeared, would shoot without the slightest hesitation.

There was a frontal assault on the door the Bat had locked. He raced to the front of the house and fired two shots through the window. He had no target for he didn't dare lean out and take aim at those below, but the roar of his guns sent the spies flying back. This couldn't last long. There were too many of them and too much territory that the Bat had to defend.

He rushed back to a window from which he could survey the lane leading to the house. Distantly he saw headlights swing off the main highway a quarter of a mile away. That would be Silk and Butch. The Bat couldn't warn them away. If he opened fire, they'd come all the faster. If he didn't, they'd run straight into a death trap.

The Bat cupped a hand to his lips. "Out there," he called. "I surrender. I'll go down and open the front door. Don't shoot!"

He sped down the steps and thrust back the bolt on the door. He flung it wide open, lit the hall lights and stood in full view with both hands in the air.

The spectacled spy called an order. All of his men came in answer to it, even those who had taken up their positions near the lane. Guns covered the Bat as the men filed into the hall. The spectacled spy stepped up to the Bat. His face was white with rage and his gun hand shook.

"So," he snarled, "it is the famous Black Bat who has been working against us. The Bat who has never before been captured. Take off that hood!"

The Bat moved back slightly until his spine was flat against the wall. "Oh, no," he said in a pleasant voice. "I'm not taking this hood off for anyone. If you want to see my face, just step forward and try to remove the hood."

"I will shoot you dead," the spy raged and his gun came up.

"You're a fool if you do," the Bat said. "If I'm dead, how can you question me? How can you determine just where I secured the information which led me to Hugo—and to you? Perhaps a hundred other people know of this hideout. Perhaps I've told them."

THE spy glared, whipped off his glasses and handed them to one of his men. He strode forward, fists clenched. With a savage oath he whipped a straight jab toward the Bat's chin. It landed against the wall and the spy gave a cry of pain.

Then a black-gloved fist flicked out, rattled the spy's front teeth until they bled. Two other men closed in, clubbing their guns. The Bat hit one of them in the pit of the stomach and gave him a powerful shove. His companions caught him, but that act held them back. The other attacking spy drew away, snarling his rage.

The leader wiped blood from his mouth and crouched. He raised one hand, like an officer might do in a signal for his men to go over the top.

"When I bring my hand down," he called, "all of you will rush him. He is not to be killed now. Later we shall see how bravely he can die. He must talk."

Suddenly there was a commotion at the rear of the group. One man yelled an alarm.

"Fritz—he has gone! A moment ago he stood by my side, now he has disappeared."

The spy leader turned swiftly, and then the Bat went into action. He lunged forward, wrapped one powerful arm around the leader's middle and with the other hand wrested the gun from his grasp. He jabbed the muzzle of it against the spy's neck.

"Now we're on slightly more even terms," he announced. "Tell your men to lay off or I'll blow your neck into their faces!"

All of the assembled spies turned back to watch the grim scene. The Bat gave no indication of surprise when he saw a giant hand suddenly inserted through the door and huge fingers close around the throat of the nearest man. He saw the spy lifted completely off the floor and whisked out of the house. One moment later another vanished in similar fashion. It was done so silently and neatly that no one even missed the departed members of the spy ring.

The leader breathed hoarsely, but he made no attempt to wriggle out of the Bat's embrace. The pressure against the nape of his neck warned him that to do so would spell sudden death. They were stalemated for the moment. One man against more than a dozen, and he held all the cards. But it couldn't last. The spies realized that they had to get this hooded being even if their leader died for it.

He seemed to know that, too, for suddenly he gave a violent wrench that pulled himself free of the Bat's restraining embrace. The spies surged forward and then things really happened. A hulk of a man stepped into the hallway. It was Butch. Above his head he held a squirming, kicking man. He hurled this human projectile into the middle of the advancing spies.

With a roar that shook the house, Butch charged forward, toppling men over with blows that broke bones when they landed. On his heels came Silk, gun clubbed. The narrow hallway hemmed in the men so closely that they had no chance to shoot. Every time one sought to dart into one of the other rooms, Butch yanked him back and the spy no longer took any interest in the fight.

SOMEONE wriggled through the crowd and started up the stairs. It was the spectacled spy. He had no gun and presented no immediate hazard, but his flight broke any morale which his men might have had left. There were only seven standing on their feet. Butch menaced these while Silk kicked fallen weapons out of their reach.

The Bat used his fists, battled a path to the stairs and went up them three at a time. He reached the top, tried to figure out in what direction the spectacled spy had fled and then—there was a single shot and the sound of a body falling heavily.

The Bat found the door of the room locked. He drew back, hurled himself at the panels and smashed the door down. Inside he saw what he expected to find. The spectacled spy had taken his defeat in a manner all spies live to dread. He had found a gun somewhere in the room and sent a bullet smashing through his own temple.

Downstairs there was further commotion. The Bat glanced out of the window and saw some of the men running madly away. He sighed, joined Butch and Silk to give them soft-spoken compliments. There were still five men groaning on the floor. Butch gathered them up by twos and deposited them in chairs. The Bat faced the group.

"Your leader has killed himself," he announced. "He has left you to take all the blame for his deeds. It means that those of you who are not citizens will be sent back to wherever you came from. By looking at you, I'd say that is Germany. You'll return to face dishonor and very probably be sent to the front as punishment. Talk and I can promise you a term in prison that will more than likely last longer than that foolish war abroad. I'm asking only once."

"But we cannot tell what we do not know," one of the men quavered. "Ritter, whom you say killed himself, was the only man we knew who directed our movements."

"Then Ritter was not the real leader? There is another?"

The talkative spy nodded, "Yes. We do not know who this man is. We have never seen him nor heard him speak. His orders came through Ritter. You must believe me. I would not lie now—when you can have us sent back. Some of us did not ask to join this service. We were forced to. If we refused, our wives and children in Germany would be taken to concentration camps and we should never again see them. You must believe me."

"We'll leave that for the F.B.I. men," the Bat said. "You'll be treated fairly even if you cannot tell us anything. Perhaps you know this—what has a watch to do with this? A watch that flies!"

The spy gaped in stupefaction. The Bat could see that this was a puzzle to him. He questioned than all further until he had no remaining doubts these men were merely dupes, held in reserve for some kind of a diabolical plot. A search of each man revealed nothing of importance beyond papers on some that indicated all of them had families abroad, families who would obviously be imperiled unless these men obeyed the orders of their superiors.

"Tie them up, Butch," the Bat ordered. "Silk, help him. I'm going to look this nest over. It's been used as a hideout for a long time and there may be something informative here."

THE Bat began a systematic search of the floor above. He dumped the contents of desks and drawers on the floor, pulled up rugs, ran window shades down their full length to see if documents had been rolled up in them.

Butch and Silk joined him after the prisoners were securely tied up. Finally the Bat entered the last room down the hall. It was small and oblong. There was hardly any space between one wall and the doorway. The Bat rapped knuckles against the wall. It sounded hollow.

"As I thought," he said grimly. "This room is too small to be true. There is a hidden panel somewhere. We've got to find it."

Butch growled, set his shoulder against the wall and shoved. Apparently the wall was thinly constructed and simply papered over to give the illusion that no secret room was behind it. Boards cracked and broke until there was an aperture through which Silk was able to squirm. In a moment the hidden panel swung open. Inside, the

Bat found a small workbench and on it what seemed to be some kind of a building, or series of buildings, done in miniature.

"Interesting," he said. "Butch, take it to the car and be very careful. This may be more important than it looks. There is a garage at the rear of this house. Undoubtedly you will find a car there. Help yourself. I'll take the coupé because I have a midnight visit to make. Go straight back to the house and be careful that none of these spies who fled are hanging around waiting to take pot shots at us."

"Them guys," Butch said, picking up the miniature building, using both hands to do so, "ain't in no shape to do any shootin', Boss. I plastered their eyes shut for 'em."

The Bat slipped quietly downstairs, listened outside the room in which the prisoners were laid out like mummies wrapped in rope, and heard them talking in low voices. Every word only served to indicate they had told the Bat the truth before. He passed through the kitchen, saw Hugo's body grotesquely propped against the wall and picked up the thousand dollar bill which had fallen from his frantic fingers. Then he made his way to where Butch had left the coupé parked.

CHAPTER IX
The Miniature

IT WAS twenty-five minutes later that the Bat appeared in the doorway of a modest living room. Lieutenant McGrath was slumped in a chair reading a newspaper and puffing complacently on his well heeled pipe.

"Good evening, Lieutenant," the Bat said pleasantly.

McGrath's feet came down with a bang. He jumped up and then he flung the newspaper on the floor.

"Okay," he growled. "You're here, so what do you want?"

The Bat spread his hands wide. "I come in peace, Lieutenant. You see, there are no guns in my hands. I have something for you."

He placed two one-thousand dollar bills on the table in front of McGrath's popping eyes. "That is blood money. Murder money! It was paid for the murders of Sloane and Collier. The man who killed them has already paid the supreme penalty. No, I did not execute him. One of his own colleagues did that. Therefore, I turn this money over to you for the pension fund.

"And while you still have that startled look on your face, I'll tell you more. If you'll take a squad and go to the last house on Belmont Lane, you'll find five men trussed up and alive. In the kitchen you'll find the body of the murderer I just told you about. Upstairs is another corpse—that of the man who led this particular group of spies. Please note that neither of these bodies bears a black bat brand."

The Bat moved toward the door, but McGrath held up his hand. "Walt a minute," he said. "You don't mean you've busted this case wide open?"

"I haven't even made a dent in it, much to my disgust," the Bat said. "However, I am progressing. But I'm afraid this spy ring is progressing even faster."

McGrath folded the two thousand dollar bills and stowed them in his vest pocket. "Would you mind if I shook your hand?" he asked.

A chuckle came from behind the Bat's hood. "Of course not, Lieutenant. That is, if you wouldn't mind shaking my hand while I keep a gun buried in your middle. My, my—you are putting on weight. Must be that you're not active enough. Can it be that you've given up trying to catch me?"

McGrath grimaced. "All right, so you won't let me get my hands on you, but one of these days—"

"I'll get you, Mr. Black Bat," the Bat finished for him, "Good night, Lieutenant. Don't accidentally light your pipe with one of those thousand dollar bills. And you needn't charge out of the house to track me down. I won't be there."

"You'll vanish, I suppose," McGrath grumbled, "down your badger hole as usual."

"I'll merely spread my wings and take flight," the Bat assured him.

The lights went out. When McGrath finally located the switch the Bat was gone. McGrath returned to his chair, stroking his chin thoughtfully. Then he phoned headquarters and had a squad sent out to arrest the spies.

The Bat found Silk and Butch waiting in the laboratory. Both of them were gingerly examining the miniature building which now rested on the lab bench. The Bat stripped off his regalia, stowed it away and donned the clothing habitual to Tony Quinn. He pulled up a high stool, sat down and studied the miniature himself.

"It's a factory of some kind," he said, "And unless my sense of detail is badly distorted, this replica is a scale model. There is nothing crude about it. In fact, I'd say an expert created this piece of work. But what does it mean? Why was it hidden in that spy nest? Why was it created in the first place?"

"I dunno," Butch offered seriously, and Tony Quinn laughed.

"Get back to your room, Butch, and be ready for plenty of trouble. Better wash your hands before you leave. An eagle-eyed cop might notice those raw knuckles and wonder whom you murdered.

Silk, how about some food? Butch, you're invited to remain if you wish."

Butch dried his hands. "I had me a little snack already," he said. "A coupla steaks and a platter of French fries. I'll get a real meal in a couple of hours, but I ain't hungry now. Say—my mitts ain't sore at all. If you want somebody else's head bashed in, just let me know."

TONY QUINN, cane between his knees and that uncanny blind look over his eyes, finished his second cup of coffee half an hour later. Silk sat across the table from him.

"That miniature building fascinates me," Quinn admitted. "If I only knew what building it represents. These spies wouldn't spend their time and money to create such a perfect miniature just to make a toy Swiss village. Look, Silk, there's a camera somewhere in the attic that I used before I became blind. Get it and see what you can do with it. Photograph this miniature from every angle, including the base of it. If everything else fails we may have to check aerial views of all factories of this type."

"Right away, sir," Silk answered. "But what's our next move? We cleaned out that nest thoroughly, but we got nothing in return. Fisk is still missing. So is Lockhart—if that isn't his corpse at the morgue."

"And Hugh Brooks has plenty to explain," the Bat mused. "He heard me phone Durrance that I was coming to see him. If Durrance didn't set that murder trap for me, Brooks might have known something about it. It seems to me he followed over to Durrance's in rather a hurry—not even stopping to put on his clothes. Perhaps he thought he'd find me dead. So, Silk, we haven't even tapped the surface of this case, but something tells me we shall do so soon."

While Silk found and dusted off the camera, Tony Quinn studied the miniature factory building intently. It was complete to the smallest detail. There were even tiny railroad tracks which led well into the factory yards. There were tall, tower-like walls with what seemed to be a crane track above them. These were arranged in batteries. A giant retort or distilling apparatus occupied a large part of the miniature and around this was another battery of those tower-like walls.

On impulse, Quinn turned the miniature upside down, working very carefully lest some part of the object be disturbed. There was nothing on the bottom. Then, as he turned it back, several of the tiny bricks dropped out of their places and fell on the bench. He noticed that they hadn't been glued in, but simply slid into tiny sockets which they fitted with meticulous precision. When Silk began taking his pictures, Quinn had him snap one showing these small bricks removed from their places in the various walls.

While Silk completed this work, Quinn began donning the regalia of the Bat again. He answered Silk's inquiring look.

"We can't waste a moment, Silk. So far we've got nowhere, while the spies have been going their own way, completing whatever diabolical scheme they have afoot. Since the repeal of our embargo laws, Nazi spies have particularly been active. If it begins to look as though Germany may lose the war because we sell her enemies so much war material, a desperate high command in Berlin may order a complete sabotage of all munitions factories in this country."

"That's right," Silk admitted. "And I think this miniature replica is that of some big factory. I wish we could identify it. I'll be finished in a few moments, sir. If I could be of help—"

Quinn thrust his guns into their holsters and drew on his black silk gloves. "Not right now, Silk. Of all our suspects the only available man happens to be Hugh Brooks. He may not be our man, but if he isn't someone has him under observation. We need clues to lead us to Fisk and Durrance—something to tell us why Lockhart should have substituted another man to plunge to death for him. I must learn more about that mysterious 'watch that flies.' Somebody phoned from Brooks' house to set that bomb trap at Durrance's for me, and I'm going to trick Brooks—or someone associated with him—into making another phone call."

The Bat slipped down into the tunnel, emerged through the garden house and made sure he was unobserved. Then he reached the coupé, pulled down the black, wide-brimmed hat he always wore on these expeditions so that no inquisitive patrolman might spot the hood of the Bat and go into action.

HE DISCOVERED that somebody had boarded up the window which he had broken only a few hours before. He noticed, too, that Brooks' place was now well guarded by Joe Allen's force of private detectives. There were four of them, constantly patrolling the estate. Only the Bat could have slipped through their lines so easily to make his stealthy way to the cellar hatch. Inside the cellarway, he examined the door.

Although inky blackness would have prevented any other man from operating in this narrow space, the Bat's eyes saw everything plainly. Like most cellar doors, this one was cheaply constructed and offered no great barrier. He picked the lock in two minutes, stepped into the cellar itself and gently closed the door behind him.

As he climbed the stairs to the first floor, he

heard voices engaged in earnest conversation. The Bat made his way into the hall, slipped behind a tall Cape Cod chair and listened. Brooks was talking to someone.

"—this moment on. I want no less than four men guarding me at all times. I'm the only one left who saw those two agents die. The killer may strike without warning this time. I'd be dead now if the Black Bat hadn't appeared. Allen, you and your men mustn't fail me now!"

Joe Allen put all the assurance possible into his voice. "My boys have orders to challenge anyone trying to get in. If they receive no reply, they have instructions to shoot. And don't think I'm laying down on the job, Mr. Brooks. I'm going to look for Fisk and Durrance immediately."

The Bat mentally praised the quality of the crepe heels and soles of his shoes for they made no sound at all as he maneuvered across the hall toward a small desk on which rested a telephone. He had a well-planned scheme to make someone use this phone and give away Durrance's hiding place. It was a dial type and the Bat went to work on it with sure, deft hands. He had brought along a small kit of extremely well made tools.

It took him only a few moments to remove the dial and expose the mechanism beneath it. He ripped a sheet from a note pad, cut a round piece out of the white paper and fitted this inside the instrument just beneath the dial. Next he broke the point off a lead pencil on the desk, fastened this into place within the phone itself. This done, he carefully reassembled the instrument, put what was left of the slip of note paper into his pocket and stepped back.

He drew a gun, edged toward the room where Detective Joe Allen was still talking to Brooks, and peered into it. Brooks was still clad in pajamas and a lounging robe. Joe Allen, sprawled out in a big chair, looked like a scarecrow.

"You have absolutely nothing to worry about," Allen was saying confidently. "You're as safe here as if you were in a cell at Sing Sing. Only those persons whom you ask to call will be admitted. No one else will even reach the front door. Take my word for that,"

"Sorry, Mr. Allen," said the Bat dryly from the doorway. "I got through without much trouble."

Joe Allen fairly bolted out of the chair, one hand streaking toward his coat pocket, Brooks grabbed his arm.

"Take it easy, Allen. That's the Black Bat. He's a friend."

ALLEN relaxed and allowed a wry grin to steal over his face. "I hope so," he said slowly. "Wouldn't do us much good if he was after your hide, Mr. Brooks. This is the first time in my life anybody ever got the drop on me."

The Bat laughed. "Please sit down again, gentlemen. If I have your word that you will not attempt to attack me, I'll put my gun away."

JOE ALLEN waved a hand magnanimously. "I'm a private dick, Bat. I haven't any desire to tackle you. Mr. Brooks has been telling me that you saved his life. If I can help you in any way, just sing out."

"I don't think you can," the Bat said and sat down facing them. "However, Mr. Brooks, you may be of some help. You are the only man left who saw Sloan and Collier die. Fisk left the room before Lockhart went to phone. Could Fisk have attacked Lockhart and thrown him out of the window?"

Brooks rubbed his chin. "Yes, that would have been possible. Allen was in the meeting room by then and his guards were still outside in the corridor. Fisk may have been alone with Lockhart before running out, and I can add this fact—Fisk knew at least a part of what Collier and Sloane were going to report. Lockhart said so. Like you, Bat, I have believed all along that Fisk is the guilty man. Who else could it be?"

"Durrance," Joe Allen suggested. "He vanished like Fisk did, getting one of my operatives killed in the process. Durrance was a clever guy. Maybe the two of 'em are in cahoots. Our next step should be locating those two men because I'm sure that what they know will solve this whole crazy case."

"I have an idea where Durrance might be," the Bat said calmly. "Earlier tonight I uncovered one of the branches of this spy organization. I captured several men and, while they didn't know much, I persuaded them to tell me all they could. One of them gave me a lead as to where Durrance might be found. I'm going there immediately."

The Bat arose. "There is no need to warn your men not to shoot me, Allen," he said. "They won't even see me. If I learn anything or find Durrance, you'll know about it—both of you. Perhaps with our next meeting we shall know enough to smash this spy ring and its leaders completely." The Bat moved toward one of the big windows at the far end of the room. He raised it very quietly and took a quick look outside. Then he touched his hooded forehead in an easy salute, pulled the drapes around himself and the window, and he was gone.

Brooks rushed over to the window and peered out. "I hope he's right, Allen. If one of your men plugs him, we'll lose the most valuable ally we've had so far."

"They didn't plug him coming in," Allen grunted, and jammed on his hat. "I'm betting fifty to one they don't now. Maybe the Bat will get Durrance. I

hope so, but just to make sure I'm going to look for him myself. I'll report in the morning as usual, Mr. Brooks. Watch yourself meanwhile?"

Joe Allen walked to the front door, opened it and called out a softly spoken order. His men responded and he passed safely through their lines. Brooks glanced at his wristwatch, sighed and yawned. He extinguished the lights and walked out into the hall.

CHAPTER X
Visitor in the Night

JUST as he disappeared from the room, the heavy velvet drapes masking the window moved slightly and the Bat emerged from behind them. His pretense of making his escape had worked beautifully. When Brooks had tried to spot him leaving the estate, the Bat had been standing not ten inches away from him. Someone was in the front hall. The Bat heard the click of the telephone being lifted from its cradle and then the sound of rapid dialing reached his ears. Whoever used the phone spoke in a whispered voice that escaped even the Bat's sensitive ears, and then hung up.

Five minutes went by and the house settled down to an eerie quiet. The Bat crept into the hallway, used his screwdriver again and removed from under the phone dial that round piece of paper. There were lines on it now, drawn by that tiny fragment of graphite. The Bat carefully set this paper directly over the phone dial.

His keen eyesight compared the marks on the paper with the location of the dial numbers until he was able to read what number had been called. He made a mental note of it, slipped back down the cellar and made his way through Joe Allen's four man guard around the house. The men were attentive and suspicious, but not one of them saw so much as the Bat's shadow.

He drove to a police signal box, put on his floppy brimmed hat and stepped out of the car. He could see the patrolman just turning the corner several blocks away and going in the other direction.

"He's just put in his duty call," the Bat told himself. "Which means he won't be back in a hurry. Now if the other patrolmen who use this box doesn't show up, I'll have something."

Opening the police signal box was accomplished easily, for the Bat carried a key that would fit any of them. He picked up the phone inside and was automatically connected with the switchboard operator at the precinct.

The Bat made his voice gruff. "I got a lost kid here, Sarge. Yeah—he don't know his name or address, but here's a hot one. He knows his phone number. It's Garland eight-nine-two-six-seven. Suppose you check on the reverse directory for the address of that number, and I'll send the kid home in a cab. What? No, if you phone his folks, they'll be worried. The kid was visiting somebody and his folks don't expect him back. That's how he got lost, see? He didn't like the place and was trying to get home again."

The Bat kept watching the deserted street, glad that it was nearly dawn and no one was around. The switchboard operator came back with the news he wanted in three minutes.

"Say, Murph, that kid sure is a long way from home. That phone is in a house at twenty-seven-ninety-four Easterbrook Road. Name of Theimer. That right?"

The Bat turned his head and spoke to the imaginary lost boy. "Your name Theimer? It is, huh? Okay, kid." Then he spoke into the phone again. "Yeah, that's it. So what if it costs me half a day's pay to get the kid home. I'll pin a note on him. Maybe his old man will look me up tomorrow night. Thanks, Sarge."

The Bat chuckled softly, got into his coupé and sent it humming north. He had little time to spare for if Brooks had made that call to warn someone that the Bat was on his way, the spies would clear out quickly or have time enough to prepare an elaborate trap from which the Bat might not escape. He stopped, slipped off his hood, donned the wide-brimmed hat and a dark topcoat which he pulled up well around his throat.

HE SCURRIED into a bus terminal, phoned Silk and was out again before anyone had a good look at him. The Bat rarely took such chances for the scars on his face would give him away to any alert policeman. It didn't help matters at all that almost every cop knew Tony Quinn, for he had been very closely associated with them during his days as a district attorney.

Silk and Butch met him at an appointed spot only half a mile from the address which the Bat had so adroitly wormed out of the switchboard sergeant at the precinct station.

"We may be too late," he told Silk and Butch as they parked and were preparing to head toward the spy rendezvous, "but if they left in a hurry, maybe they forgot a clue. At any rate, I have an idea you two will come in handy."

Then the Bat saw headlights flash from a garage behind the house they stalked. He darted toward the sedan which Silk and Butch had used.

"Both of you stay here," he ordered. "I'll follow that car. When we're out of sight, sneak into the place and see what's going on. Be careful—all of them may not be in the car."

The headlights didn't turn in their direction fortunately, and he sent the heavy sedan racing after them. He used no headlights, for the Bat could see the road just as plainly without them.

He remained far enough behind so that those in the speeding car would neither hear his motor nor catch a glimpse of the sedan. The chase led to a state highway which stretched out like a huge gray ribbon in the night. The Bat's odometer logged four miles before the spy car began to slow up. Finally it stopped altogether, and the Bat braked his own sedan.

Then he saw one man being forcibly shoved out. The distance was too great to identify this man, but the Bat had an idea that the spies were resorting to the old gangster trick of getting rid of an unwanted passenger. This hunch became even stronger when the lone individual began running like mad away from the spy car.

The Bat stepped on the gas pedal hard. He saw a jet of orange flame lance out from the rear door of the car. The running man ran all the faster. Again the weapon barked and missed. The Bat was drawing closer and closer. In a moment those spies would see him bearing down on them. Without question guns would then be turned on the Bat, but he kept on going. The running man saw him approach and waved both hands while he yelled in terror.

"Head for the brush and drop!" The Bat yelled as he raced by. Then he forgot about the intended victim. The men inside the car were concentrating their efforts on him now. The section of windshield to his right cobwebbed, and he gave silent thanks that it was shatter-proof. Bullets spanged against the fenders and the radiator, but still that sedan hurtled forward, aimed straight at the spy car. Suddenly all four doors of the spy car opened and erupted five men. They streaked away for safety. Let this fool of a driver crash if he wanted to. It would make things all the easier.

But when it seemed impossible to avoid a devasting crash, the Bat turned the wheel steadily and without jerking. The muscles in his arms bulged under the strain, but he whisked by the spy car with several inches to spare. Tires screeched and the sedan swayed drunkenly, but the Bat made it without overturning. He tramped on the brake until he felt certain that it was safe to attempt a wide swing. The car took that turn on two wheels, straightened up and roared hack.

AS HE approached the spy car, he saw that all five men were searching for their intended victim. A moment later the fugitive appeared as fright got the better of calm judgment. He broke from the brush and began running madly away. Guns spouted at him and the spies took up the chase.

Then they heard the howl of the Bat's motor, glanced over their shoulders and spread in all directions. Guns flared as the sedan hurtled by, but no slugs found a mark. The running man followed up when he recognized the oncoming car. The Bat opened the right-hand front door, slowed down, and the murder victim leaped aboard.

"Thank you," he panted, half-sobbing. "Thank you very much. I thought I was—"

He stopped short when he saw the eerie black hood over the Bat's head. He gasped and reached for the door.

"Relax," the Bat said curtly. "Do you think I'd have bothered to save you if I planned on harming you? I'm the Black Bat. Who are you?"

"D-Durrance," the man licked his lips. "I-I'm sorry I'm so damned nervous, but I-I've been through so much."

"I know, but you're quite safe now. Tell me what happened at your home after I called. Were you kidnapped?"

"The Black Bat? Of course! Anyway, about five or ten minutes after you phoned, someone knocked on the door with that same signal you told me to expect. I opened the door and two men seized me. They wound some kind of cloth around my head and dragged me to a car. I think they chloroformed me. When I woke up, I was in some kind of a house. I can show you where it is."

"I already know," the Bat said. "That's where I picked up your trail. Why did they snatch you? What did they want?"

"A watch!" Durrance said in perplexity. "They wanted to know what happened to a watch that Collier and Sloane had brought to the meeting room. I didn't know what they were talking about, but they wouldn't believe me. I didn't see any watch."

"Who questioned you?" the Bat wanted to know as he turned off the highway and headed back toward the spy nest.

"I don't know. They had me in a dark room. I couldn't see the man who questioned me. But when I didn't answer, two of the men kept slapping my face until I almost went mad. And finally they took me out to kill me. It's all very well to be patriotic, as Lockhart used to say, but when they torture me, try to kill me, that's more than I can stand. I'm going away."

A flashlight winked and Silk stepped out into the road. The Bat stopped, stepped out of the car and led Silk a few feet away.

"Butch is still in the house," Silk reported. "We couldn't find a thing!"

"Don't get close enough to the car so that Durrance can identify you," the Bat warned. "But watch him. The road, too. Those spies may be back."

The Bat hurried to the house. Butch let him in. Without turning on any lights, the Bat started a careful search of the place. He located the room where Durrance had been questioned and tortured. It was a small, windowless room and the ropes that had bound Durrance were still on the floor. There was a small table with a chair beside it on one corner. The Bat's eyes flicked across the table top and he grunted in surprise and pleasure. The surface of that table was covered with glass.

"REMOVE the glass top," the Bat told Butch, "Be careful that you don't smear any finger prints that may be on it. Wrap it completely in a piece of cloth."

Butch fell to work while the Bat kept on searching the rest of the place. He gave up after several minutes. These spies were more than ordinarily careful. Nothing was left behind that would incriminate them or shed the slightest light on the identity of their leader. In the east the sky was turning gray. The Bat hurried back to the car, signaled that Silk and Butch were to take the coupé while he got into the sedan where Durrance was still sitting, wide-eyed with terror. The Bat headed toward the city.

"You don't know it," he told Durrance, "but your house has been gutted by explosion and fire. The only place where you can go is to a hotel. Supposing you register at the Hotel Schyler under the name of John Lind. I can reach you there if necessary and you'll be quite safe so long as you keep to your room."

"I'll do anything you say," Durrance agreed. "You saved my life and I know you must be trying to help me."

The Bat dropped Durrance off at a convenient spot, put on his wide-brimmed hat and drove through the early dawn back toward his own house. Butch was waiting just inside the gate and he drove the sedan sway. The Bat didn't use the tunnel this time. Silk was waiting at the back door of the house. They went inside. Silk picked up the glass top which Butch had taken from the table at the spy nest.

"It's a forlorn hope," the Bat said, "but we can't pass up any chances. I'll have a look for prints at once. Let's go into the lab, Silk."

Silk began drawing the window shades in the library. "Did you notice, sir," he asked, "that something strange happened in the neighborhood while we were away? The gasoline station two blocks from here was blown up. That little hardware store where I buy bullets for target practice had smashed windows and looks as though it has been gutted by fire."

The Bat opened the secret door to the lab. "That's odd, Silk. Almost too odd to be coincidental, but we've got plenty—"

The Bat stopped abruptly and jerked erect. He almost dropped the section of plate glass that he held. Silk peered over the Bat's shoulder.

Both men stared speechlessly at the bench where the miniature factory had been resting. The miniature had been torn into a thousand pieces and hurled in all directions. A delicate instrument had fallen to the floor. A yellow-colored chemical dripped from a tipped-over reagent bottle. The laboratory which the Bat believed so well hidden and so perfectly protected was almost in ruins.

The Bat whirled around. "Someone was in here," he ground out. "Someone has guessed that Tony Quinn and the Black Bat are one and the same.

"Search the house and keep your gun handy! Every closet, every corner, Silk. Don't miss a spot. We must find the man who came here sad destroyed that miniature."

CHAPTER XI

Dangerous Assignment

BUT an hour's search inside and outside the house revealed nothing. An examination of doors and windows showed not the slightest trace of a forced entry. The garden house and the tunnel leading into the laboratory gave no clue to an invader.

When he was certain that no one lurked in or near the house, the Bat peeled off his regalia and became Tony Quinn once more. He automatically picked up his cane and allowed that mask of blindness to steal over his eyes. He sat down heavily. Silk kept mopping his forehead and his usually immaculate shirt collar was wilted.

"It had to happen," Quinn said slowly. "It was bound to, Silk. I knew from the start that we couldn't get away with our act forever, but—well, I thought somebody like Commissioner Warner or even Lieutenant McGrath would be the first to identify us in our true light. Instead of that, it's some brawling spy with his hands dripping menace for the whole world. Now he's got us cornered, but we'll fight, Silk. From this moment on we've got to work fast."

Quinn thrust his cane under one arm and no longer pretended that he was blind. He strode into the laboratory, carefully swept the debris aside and went to work. He dusted both surfaces of the plate glass, brought out several remarkable clear fingerprints and hastily catalogued them. He compared notes and then leaned back with a long sigh. Silk heard it and looked inquisitively at Quinn as he emerged from the laboratory and closed the door.

"A man, concealed by darkness, questioned Durrance," Quinn explained. "He sat before a small table and he left a few souvenirs—his fingerprints, Silk. They are identical with those we found on Lockhart's personal effects."

"So it's Lockhart!" Silk groaned. "What can we do, sir? How did he ever suspect you?"

"I don't know that," Quinn replied, "but I have an answer to your first question. So far, almost every inning belongs to the spies, but from this moment on, we'll take the offensive. We must work faster than ever before and our feet mustn't slip a fraction of an inch. Those pictures you took of that miniature factory, Silk. Where are they?"

"Upstairs in one of the spare rooms," Silk said. "I hung the prints up there to dry. I'll bring them down at once, sir."

Silk sped away. Quinn kept pounding his right fist into the palm of his left hand. For the first time in months he was displaying nervousness. Exposure meant the end of The Black Bat! Meant an end of Tony Quinn, too, if those spies chose to attack in force.

Quinn even considered a consultation with Police Commissioner Warner, a frank confession and a plea for help. Then his jaws snapped together. The Black Bat worked alone. He asked no help, wanted none except from that small group whom he knew could be trusted. Something banged against the front door and brought Quinn to his feet with a start.

He muttered a savage curse. That was the morning newspaper. Even a newsboy was giving him the jitters. Not since the weeks that he had tapped his way around, totally blind and without hope of ever recovering his sight, had Tony Quinn been so much on edge. He walked to the front door, peered out through a small window and then opened the door far enough to reach out and snag the newspaper.

SILK came hurrying downstairs as his master unfolded the paper. Quinn's eyes opened very wide. He walked into the library, sat down heavily and stared into the empty fireplace. Silk saw the headlines over Quinn's shoulder.

TWENTY-EIGHT MYSTERIOUS
EXPLOSIONS AND FIRES ROCK CITY

Last night, between the hours of two and four, fire and police officials were kept on the run by twenty-eight explosions and fires that occurred with startling rapidity. They were entirely confined to gasoline tanks and hardware stores, police are checking labor difficulties, but already state that there is no solution in that direction. Most of the hardware stores were privately owned and operated solely by the men who held title to them.

SILK

There was more, columns of it. Quinn looked up at Silk.

"That," he said, "was no coincidence. All this has something to do with the spy ring. Look at the addresses, Silk. These explosions happened in concentrated parts of the city. Commissioner Warner lives in one, Lieutenant McGrath in another. That F.B.I. agent, Mike Igoe—four gas stations blew up in the vicinity of his home. More near Police Headquarters and the field headquarters building of the F.B.I."

"But what could it mean?" Silk asked. "What caused those explosions? I always thought that when spies went to work they tackled big things like the Raritan Arsenal or some of those big factories where they make ammunition and—"

"Those pictures," Quinn cried eagerly. "Quick, Silk! You've put me onto something."

Silk spread out the photographs he had taken of the miniature factory. Quinn used a magnifying glass to bring out each particular detail. He began making notes.

"It's some kind of a coal tar producing factory," he said finally. "There are batteries of coke furnaces, giant distillation apparatus, big chimneys—everything that such a plant produces. There was a reason why that miniature was made to scale—and why it was destroyed. Silk, we've got to find the original of that miniature. Somewhere there is a real factory in danger. Perhaps here is the motive that lies behind the spy ring. We must identify that plant. But how?"

"We might try to find books on the subject and see if there are any pictures in them," Silk said.

"That would take too long. I've got it! First I want you to print, in a precise hand, the words

PROPERTY OF WAR DEPARTMENT on the back of each picture. "Then slip out through the tunnel and bring Carol back. We can't risk phoning her from here—not after what's happened. Hurry!"

Carol came very promptly. Quinn spoke to her in a strained voice. "I hate to send you on an expedition of this kind, but Butch couldn't handle it deftly and Silk is out of the question. He might be recognized. I want you to take these pictures to the commanding officer at the arsenal across the river. Tell him you found them, noticed they were marked as government property, and you came to return them.

"Pretend you know they are pictures of the arsenal itself and would probably be valuable property in the hands of spies. Then watch and listen. The moment you learn what factory this really is we'll have something to go on."

Carol tucked the envelope of pictures under one arm. She took a cab as far as the river, crossed via a ferry and boarded a trolley to reach the arsenal. She explained patiently to the sentry what she wanted. It took a few moments, but she was soon ushered into the offices of a colonel of the Chemical Warfare Service.

CAROL laid the pictures on the desk and quietly explained where she had found them.

"I think they are pictures of this very arsenal," she said excitedly. "See—everything looks the same."

The army officer glanced at her sharply. Then he smiled. "I really don't know how these came to be marked as the property of the War Department, young lady. They are not pictures of this arsenal, but of a coal tar manufacturing plant. Odd, though—no one should be allowed to take such pictures in these times?"

He picked up the phone. "Get me the superintendent of the Acme Dye plant in Burgoyne."

Carol backed toward the door. "I'll go now if you don't mind, sir. I hope I didn't make trouble for anyone by returning the pictures."

"Not at all, young lady," the colonel assured her. "Leave your name and address with the corporal outside— just in case we need you again. And thanks, very much."

As Carol closed the door of the colonel's office, she didn't notice a piercing-eyed man watching her intently. She didn't see this man draw a small camera from a pocket and quickly take a couple of shots of her.

"She brings pictures and perhaps maps," this man told himself, "Therefore she must be a counter espionage agent. It is well that I have her picture."

Carol passed by the corporal who was seated at a desk in the outer office, hurriedly left the premises and took a trolley back to town. There she used the ferry again and then a cab. An hour after leaving the arsenal, she was reporting to Tony Quinn.

"The colonel recognized it as the Acme Dye Works in Burgoyne, Tony. He was phoning them when I left—going to find out how come they permitted such pictures to be made. He said they were not government property and he told me to leave my name and address with the corporal in the other office. Of course I didn't."

Quinn chuckled. "A girl like you wouldn't be supposed to know that, darling. Now I'm afraid there is more work for you. Burgoyne isn't far from the city. Go there and get a job. Any kind of a job. I'll send Butch along just to be sure you're safe. Keep your ears and eyes open. This is a dangerous assignment, but they may not suspect a girl. We'll keep in touch with you. If things get too hot, leave immediately. If anything ever happened to you, Carol, I'd never forgive myself."

Carol perched on the arm of Quinn's chair and smiled down at him. "This time, Tony, it's a question of many, many lives. If what you think is true and American factories are filling up with saboteurs, I won't let you down because I'd be letting down a lot of other people, too. And I won't risk my foolish neck. I promise you that. Soon as I'm settled, I'll send you word. I ought to be there by early evening."

"Good," Quinn said. "I'll tell you what I wish to know after you're working there and able to get around the plant."

He led her to the hidden laboratory door and Silk discreetly departed until he heard the door shut Quinn looked more genuinely worried than Silk had ever seen him.

"It's not enough that someone may know Tony Quinn is the Bat," he growled. "Now I'm forced to send Carol into danger, too. Contact Butch and tell him to go to this Acme Dye Works to keep an eye on Carol. They're hiring men and women in those factories as fast as they can get them. Neither Carol nor Butch should have any trouble landing something."

CHAPTER XII
Yellow Fog

PRECISELY at seven the next morning Carol put on a modest dress, an old hat and a pair of none too prosperous looking shoes. It took her exactly five minutes to land a job. At eight o'clock she was being shown how to fill hand grenades. The Acme Dye Works, it seemed, made their dyes in another part of the country and devoted all available space here to the manufacture of high explosives on order to foreign

governments. This was a war industry in full swing. Located in a somewhat small town, every person who could pass a physical test got a job.

At ten-thirty, Carol noticed a hollow-checked man dressed in dirty overalls regarding her intently. He even went so far as to put on a pair of glasses to study her features all the more intently. Carol turned her back on him, but not deliberately. Things might break from any angle and she wanted all avenues wide open.

But Carol would not have felt so confident had she known that concealed in the palm of his hand was a small photograph of herself. Hollow-cheek walked out of the building, headed for a gateman's booth and stepped in.

The gateman, a lynx-eyed, scowling man, growled, *"Ja ja,"* at his visitor's hoarsely whispered command and stepped out.

Hollow-cheek was alone in the gatehouse. zHe drew a screw driver from his pocket and disconnected the telephone wires. He opened a closet apparently used for rags and waste. He pulled some of this out, uncovered another phone connection and quickly attached the factory instrument. He raised the receiver and waited until there was a click and an accented voice demanded to know his business.

"This is Karl," he said. "In the morning's mail I received the usual batch of pictures of persons we should watch for. There was a girl—number two-seven-eight—whom Heinrich saw in the offices of the Raritan Arsenal yesterday. She must be a counterespionage agent. I await orders."

The man at the other end of the phone gave these orders without hesitation. "Watch her closely. See that the others are notified of her presence. When you see an opportunity—strike! But don't kill her until she reveals who sent her. Karl, there are further orders. We must have more of that mixture fifty-four—much more of it very soon. You had best use the plan you outlined to me a week ago. That is all for now."

Karl hastily hung up, disconnected the instrument and transferred it back to its regular line. He summoned the gateman and left, he crossed the huge yard, glancing at the skyscraping coke towers where coal was roasted so that its derivates could be gathered and turned into gas, dyes and the mightiest explosives in the world.

"The stupid pigs," Karl muttered to himself. "In time of war this plant would be more valuable than a dozen army corps, and yet I could destroy it any moment I wished."

He grinned crookedly, made his way into the grenade room—and was almost bowled over by a giant of a man. Karl hissed a curse, but the big man only grinned like a simpleton and passed on.

Karl didn't see the giant's mighty fists curl into knots. Butch often took savage dislikes on sight and this was one of the times. He had observed this man watching Carol so intently. Butch was a slow-thinking individual highly given to following hunches. He had one now—that this factory was a potential powderkeg of trouble.

Butch's orders were definite and simple. To watch Carol and act if she got into any kind of trouble.

THEY met at the lunch hour, but Carol signaled Butch to merely trail her. Butch followed her to a deserted shack far out of the factory yard.

"There is a man with a face like a stiff," Butch said, approaching. "He was watching you all morning. I think he must know you."

Carol smiled at him, "Thanks, Butch. I'll watch for him. But how could anyone know me? I've never even been in this vicinity before. However, I don't like the way things are going here. Too many nosey people. Have you noticed that small room just off the corridor where the time clocks are located? I found out that they carelessly keep a new kind of explosive known as Mixture fifty-four in there.

"Some people can't seem to realize, Butch, that this factory is aiding only one side of that European War. The other side can't like this situation and if they could put a stop to it, they most certainly would. Yet new employees aren't even questioned as to their background. If they possess two good hands and sense enough not to light a match, they're given jobs here. I'm betting this plant is ovenrun with foreign agents.

"Lots of Heinies," Butch said. "I been hearin' 'em talk. I guess you're right, too. The guy in the employment office took only one look at me and I had the job. He even told a couple of other guys that they wouldn't have to buy a new derrick now. Funny, ain't he? Well—there goes the whistle. We'd better get back."

Carol went first. Butch trailed far behind her. As Carol stepped into the long corridor where the time clocks were set up, she noticed the hawk-faced man who had been watching her duck away from one of the clocks and walk briskly toward the door. She shrugged and then hurried on when she realized that there was a line in back of her.

Outside, in the huge factory yard, two light delivery trucks pulled up. The gateman with the lynx eyes had passed them without the inspection he was supposed to make. They rolled to a stop just outside the building in which Carol was now getting ready to punch her time card.

She removed the card from its slot, inserted it into the clock and pulled the lever to punch it. As the lever came down, there was an explosion. The glass face of the clock flew into a thousand pieces

and a stream of yellow fog emanated from it. Further down the corridor other jets of yellow smoke were emitted from chinks in the wall. Carol reeled back. Involuntarily she took in one choking gasp of air. For a moment she thought her lungs would burst. A cloudy film came over her eyes. She felt as though giant fingers were strangling her.

A factory guard, entering the corridor from outside, saw men and women dropping to the floor, overcome by the yellow fog. He opened his mouth to scream a warning, his hand whipping his gun from its holster, but behind him appeared a scowling man with a gun in his hand. The weapon rose and fell. The guard took the blow squarely on the top of his head and without a sound he collapsed, limp as an empty sack.

Carol was aware of falling. It seemed miles before she struck the floor. Then, as through a dim haze, she saw the hawk-faced man with a dripping cloth pressed against his nose and month bend down beside her. She wanted to scream, but every muscle and nerve was paralyzed. He picked her up, let the cloth fall to the floor and was very careful not to breathe again until he was outside where fresh air dissipated the asphyxiating fumes.

MEN were jumping from the light delivery trucks that had pulled up. Each wore a gas mask that made a nightmarish monster of him. They aped into the yellow, fog-filled corridor, darted through it and into the room where the mixture of newly invented powder was stored. There wasn't much of it, but they took every ounce they could find, then they rushed back and clambered into the trucks.

One of them listened to orders from Karl, the hawk-faced man, nodded and touched his gas masked forehead in a stiff salute. He climbed into the truck, shoved Carol's inert form far up inside and proceeded to tie and gag her.

Employees were rushing up now. Leading them was Butch. He alone saw Karl sidle back into the gas-filled corridor. Butch grimly watched factory doctors bring him back to consciousness again ten minutes later.

"I do not know what happened," Karl said. "Someone punched the time clock and then it all began. That gas—I was knocked out at once." Karl was helped to his feet.

"It was a harmless gas, but it knocked out everyone in that corridor." he explained. "Spies, Karl. They stole every grain of Mixture fifty-four. They must be crazy, for the formula for that stuff is no deep secret. Well, get everyone back to work who is able to work. I've got to see the super and make a report. Trouble, trouble! This damn factory thrives on it."

Karl watched the assistant superintendent hurry away. He smiled complacently, spat on the ground and turned about. For a moment Karl was hypnotized into a state of inaction. That brute of a man whom he had bumped into and cursed was standing not fifteen feet away and regarding him as a serpent might look at a bird before it pounced. Karl shivered, drew himself up and scowled.

"You do not look like the gas hurt you much," the foreman growled. "Get back to work or draw your pay and get out of here."

Butch grunted and sluggishly obeyed. Karl's right hand touched a flat, unobtrusive object in his hip pocket, beneath his overalls. Then he shrugged. That big ape was too stupid looking to know anything. Even if he had noticed Karl, what matter? Big or small, nosey men dropped before the flaming muzzle of the gun he carried. Karl strolled over to the gatehouse.

"The trucks passed through without being noticed," the gatekeeper told him in a whisper. "It worked like a charm."

Karl nodded and turned back. Everything had progressed with the smoothness that only the well oiled machine built up by the spy leader could have accomplished. Yet Karl had a feeling, far back in his mind, that all wasn't well. That hulking giant of a man with those cold, deadly eyes. If only he hadn't been around, Karl would have felt much better.

All afternoon Karl was too busy to think of Butch again. Government agents asked him dozens of questions. He lied fluently and they believed him. After all, Karl was a trusted employee with a fine record that extended over a period of years. What the government agents didn't know was the fact that Karl was the nucleus of a massive spy organization that had grown rapidly until it was now capable of inflicting terrific losses upon every industry in the United States which was connected with the manufacture of munitions.

Karl was thirty minutes late when he checked out. He climbed into his cheap, second-hand car and drove straight home. He lived alone in a two-room house set well apart from the other factory houses. It was better that way. No one to ask stupid questions. Karl was actually glowing as he shut off the motor of his car.

Soon now, very soon, he'd be given a promotion and more pay. The factory paid him a good wage, but Karl was ambitious. He wanted to stand beside the unknown leader of the spy ring and receive some of the salutes from the more humble of the operatives. Things were going along nicely.

Karl opened the door of his little house, closed it behind him and slid home a huge bolt. Then he turned on the lights. For a full minute he was certain that his eyes and his mind played him tricks. The hulk of a man whom he had cursed and feared was sitting at Karl's own table, eating Karl's own food.

CHAPTER XIII
Influence of Fear

KARL reached for his gun, his thin face venomous. Quick as a flash the hulking Butch arose, gave the table a lusty shove toward the enraged Karl just as the latter sprang forward with clubbed gun in upraised hand. Butch leaped for the other side of the room.

With a howl of triumph the treacherous foreman evaded the crashing table and reversed his gun to fire. He never made it. A catsup bottle sailed across the room and collided violently with his forehead. The cap was off, and the stuff splattered all over him. He reeled back against the wall and a glassy look came into his eyes.

Before he could recover, a vast hand had him by the throat while its mate disarmed him with ridiculous ease.

"Get nasty, will you?" boomed a mighty voice. "And me just havin' a little sociable snack while I was waitin' for you to come home. Now we're gonna have a little talk about puttin' girls in trucks and haulin' 'em away. This catsup ain't nothin' to what you're gonna look like if you don't talk straight, pal. Know what I mean?"

Karl showed that he understood quite plainly by the glint of terror in his eyes. Then, before he could answer, he was shaken like a terrier shakes a rat and fairly thrown across the room onto the couch. Butch then calmly peeled off his coat.

"I don't like to get my clothes all covered with blood," he explained. "It don't wash out like catsup, see?"

"Blood?" Karl repeated with a gasp of horror.

"Yeah. Yours, Dutchie," Butch went on conversationally as he rolled up his sleeves. "That is, unless you got more sense than I give you credit for. You see, that girl you had your pals cart away this afternoon is a friend of mine. I was watchin' you, and I know you had her snatched. Also you knew all about that funny business with the knockout gas. You didn't get knocked stiff until long after everybody else did. Then you took a whiff of that stuff so you'd fall on the floor and be a big hero."

"Wh-what do you mean?" Karl quavered. This wasn't spy work, facing an inhuman giant like this. A man who talked calmly of spilling blood and who was so huge that no ordinary man could escape him.

"Where is the girl, buddy? And it better be the truth because the last guy I handled this way, didn't live. Maybe you want a sample of my work, huh?"

Butch's hamlike paw gripped Karl's leg just above the ankle, and squeezed. Karl gave a bleat of pain and Butch grinned. That hadn't hurt the guy much, but like the Black Bat always said, scare a guy enough and he'll think you're killing him.

"No-no, do not break my leg," Karl yelped. "I don't know anything about a girl. I swear it! I'll give you money—lots of money! A thousand dollars! I have it! Wait—let me go, and I'll show you."

"Why?" Butch asked patiently. "If I wanted your dough, I'd wring your neck and take it. But I don't, see? I want to know where that girl was taken and in about half a minute you're goin' to wish you'd told me, pal. After I finish, you'll only be able to walk again with a crutch. Wise up. Where is she?"

Karl gulped. Through his mind flashed a picture of himself hobbling on crutches. This was wrong. He was supposed to be in the place of this big man. He was supposed to be doing the threatening and the crippling. No man could do this to him—Karl Hannemann—who was on his way to becoming one of the shrewdest spies in the business.

Then Karl gave a piercing yell of agony. He could feel the arteries and veins bulging in his leg. He could feel bones grinding against one another. He knew what crushed veins meant—amputation. He screamed again.

BUTCH'S features didn't alter in the least. He retained his grip on Karl's leg, rubbed the lobe of his ear with the other hand and looked down at his quivering victim.

"You better tell me where the girl is, pal. Next time you won't yell because you'll pass out. It ain't so nice when you wake up. Take it from me, it ain't. The last guy I tackled like this—"

"Stop," Karl moaned. "*Himmel*, you are killing me! I cannot stand it. I will talk. I will tell you anything you want to know. I swear it. Only let go of my leg. I cannot stand it."

Butch's grip relaxed. Karl's leg was only faintly bruised. Butch had never studied psychology nor any kindred subjects pertaining to the human mind. All he knew was that if you talked tough and pretended hard enough, the other guy usually came through. The Bat had taught him that lesson and it sunk deeply into Butch's brain.

"She has been taken to Philadelphia," Karl groaned. "My leg—I know it is broken in several places. You cannot do this to me!"

"Where, in Philly?" Butch asked and his fingers touched Karl's ankle again.

"To a house on the corner of Andover Street and some avenue. I am not sure. That is the truth—I would not lie to you."

"O'course, you wouldn't," Butch said. He reached down, lifted Karl from the couch and carried him over to a small closet. "While you was delayed at the factory," he explained, "I did a little work here. I ripped out part of the closet floor, but so's I could

put it back again and nobody'd ever see what I done. Then I dug a hole in the ground.

"Now, pal, I know you wouldn't lie to me because I like you, see? And you like me only maybe you don't know that yet. So I'm takin' your word that the girl is in Philly. But just to make sure, I'll tie you up and stick you in that hole I made. If the girl is where you say she is, I'll be back in a day o' two. But if she ain't—well, I gotta find her.

"If I had to start really lookin', I might not be back for a week or more. Nobody'd find you in that hole and maybe you'd starve. It ain't so nice dyin' that way. But here I am shootin' off my mouth when I know, and you know, I'll be back before you look like a skeleton, because you wouldn't lie."

Butch opened the closet door, and Karl let out a wail.

"No! I made a mistake. She is not in Philadelphia. I forgot. They are taking her to an island—it is known as Green Cove and is two miles off shore. But if you go after her, they will kill you, and I will starve. You cannot leave me here, buried in the ground where I will never be found."

Butch drew Karl very close to him and suddenly hurled the man clear across the room. He hit the wall, knocked a picture off a wall and slid to the floor groaning dismally. Butch walked over to him, dragged him to his feet again and waved a mighty fist in front of his nose.

"You're a sucker for bloody stories, pal. I ain't goin' to bury you, but I don't like your puss so I'll change it a little—before I call in the cops."

HE USED his fist twice and then he let Karl

Quick as a flash Butch arose, gave the table a lusty shove toward the enraged Karl, and leaped for the other side of the room.

drop to the floor. He blew on his knuckles a moment and then tied his victim up. He stuffed him in the closet—where there wasn't a sign of an excavation—and locked the door on him.

Butch sauntered out of the little house, casually walked over to Karl's sedan and got in. He drove straight to the city, parked and entered the railroad station, He squeezed his bulk into a phone booth and dialed the long-distance operator. He kept watching out of the booth window for signs of men who might have trailed him. But Butch was reasonably certain no one suspected him and that none had witnessed his little act at Karl's house.

"Hello, Silk?" he said. "Yeah, it's me. Listen, they got Carol. Snatched her right under my nose. Huh? Sure I know where she is. There's a island called Green Cove two miles off shore. They took her there. You tell certain parties, will you? I'll meet you on the island. Who? Me? Nuts, huh? Listen, maybe you're smarter'n me, but I ain't no slouch when it comes to handling my dukes and, mister, this job calls for stuff like that. I said I'd be seein' you on the island."

Butch hung up with a grin, Then he rubbed his chin. He consulted a phone book and called the offices of the F.B.I. in a neighboring city.

"This," he announced, "is a pal of Uncle Sam, see? You guys remember that mess at the Acme plant this afternoon? Well, the guy that did it is Karl, a foreman. He is tied up in his house. Tell him if he don't talk, a certain guy will come back and squeeze his leg some more. And listen—the gateman is in cahoots with him. So long!"

Butch hung up and had presence of mind enough to hurry away from the phone as fast as possible. Even before he turned the corner three blocks away, he heard police sirens.

CHAPTER XIV
Island of Danger

CAROL awoke with a splitting headache and the strange feeling that she was in a pitching boat. She opened her eyes and looked up at a starry sky. Then she tried to move, only to find that her ankles and wrists were securely tied. Someone came over beside her. A flashlight was turned on, and her bonds examined. The man grunted and disappeared again. But Carol was certain that she was on some kind of a boat, for each step this man took made the craft rock from side to aide,

Memory returned and she recalled the exploding time clock and the hawk-faced foreman carrying her into the open. But what else had happened? Where was Butch?

Carol didn't have time to give further thought to him. She felt the bow of the craft scrape against a rocky beach. Two men picked her up and carried her ashore.

They wended their way along a crooked path between heavily foliaged trees until they reached a clearing. There Carol saw her first glimpse of lights. There was some kind of a house, a big place, if the reception hall was any indication. Carol's captors sat her down and one of them slit the rope around her ankle. He was a redheaded, straw-haired youth.

"You may walk now, *Fraulein*. Later, if you do not disobey, we shall free your hands as well. You will follow me, please."

Carol found that walking was rather difficult for her feet seemed paralyzed from the ropes that had almost shut off the blood supply. She was taken to a small room equipped with a huge, black leather chair standing in one corner and a straight-backed, uncomfortable looking chair in the center of the floor. Her guide indicated that she was to sit down in the straight-backed chair. He withdrew after a whispered warning that she was only to be questioned.

Suddenly the lights went out. Carol half arose from her chair. A low, whispered voice came from the vicinity of the leather chair in the corner.

"Don't move! We mean you no harm here, *Fraulein*, if you will cooperate with us. There is no use to lie for we know everything. Yesterday, for instance, you visited Colonel Rapport of the Raritan Arsenal. You took to him certain plans and photographs. You were observed there and carefully watched. You were well dressed, apparently had plenty of money. But this morning you turned up at the Acme Dye Works, dressed cheaply and looking for a low-paid job. Will you inform me what division of the United States Service you are connected with?"

"You've got a lot to learn," Carol retorted. "Some of it is going to surprise you. Take that skinny-faced foreman spy of yours at the Acme. You probably think he's so safely entrenched that he's immune. I hate to bet much on where he is now."

Carol tried to penetrate the darkness for a glimpse at this unknown power behind the spy ring. She had no doubts but that this man was the one responsible for everything that had happened so far. But even the man's voice gave no indication as to his identity.

He spoke in that stagy whisper again. "Bluffing rarely works with me. Karl will never be suspected and if there were another counterespionage agent in the factory, we should know about that, too. Our organization, you see, is much more efficient than any your government has yet devised. Now we must get down to business. Why were you sent to the Acme Dye Works? Who sent you?"

SHE was trying to slide the ropes off her wrists. If she could only get her hands free while she was alone with this man who needed darkness to shield his face. One good look at him, a quick dash for help, and she'd clinch the whole case. She had no idea where she was and despite the boat trip, it never occurred to her that this might be an island.

"You refuse to answer?" the man in the darkness snapped. "Very well. There will be plenty of time for later discussions. We have methods that usually work. You will be locked up without food or water until you send me word that you will tell everything."

Carol heard the sound of muffled hands clap twice. The door opened behind her and the straw-haired youth came in. He helped her up, gave her a rough push as they went through the door and led her down narrow, dirty steps into a cellar. Carol shivered at the chill that pervaded the place. She saw a stooped man emerge from the shadows, take a key from his pocket and open a thick, wooden door. Carol was thrust inside and the door slammed in her face. She stepped back and gave out with a lusty kick. The only results of the kick consisted of a cry of pain, a sore toe and a slight scratch against a door faced with steel plate.

Carol began walking sideward through the inky darkness, intent on measuring the size of her cell. She banged a shoulder against a wall that also felt as though it was made of steel. Finally she all but fell over a low stool and she sat down on it with a weary sigh. Her wrists were still tied behind her and they ached from fingertips to elbows. There wasn't even a barred window in the cell. Only the feel of silt on the floor.

She concentrated all her thinking powers on a plan to get free. Her wrists first, of course. When they brought her dinner, she'd make them free her. But—there was going to be no dinner. No water either, for that matter. Carol suddenly began to feel hungry. She forced her thoughts to other things. If she could hold out long enough, there would be a chance. Butch had suspected that hawk-faced man named Karl. When Butch missed her, he'd look up Karl and if the spy refused to talk, Butch would promptly call in the Bat.

After a long wait a key scratched on the outside of the door and finally the bolt turned. The stooped man came in, holding a knife in one gnarled hand. He scowled at her.

"Swine of an American spy," he hissed. "If I had my way, you would be at once killed. However, I am not the master here. I was ordered to free your hands. Turn around and do not move for the knife I hold is sharp and eager."

Carol let him cut her arms loose. She turned around, looked at the stooped man and had to repress a shudder. He was an evil looking gnome with long hair, matted beard and yellow, rotten teeth. She chafed her wrists for a moment, then swayed and toppled to the floor. The guard uttered an exclamation of surprise and bent closer to peer at her.

Carol knew it was now or never. Her right hand had been feverishly scraping up the dust on the floor. Now she moved swiftly and flung the handful of silt squarely into his face.

The stuff struck the guard full in the eyes. He gave a yell of pain and frustration, made a savage, sweeping lunge to grab Carol and missed her by more than a foot. She arose, raised her foot, removed one of the cheap and rather heavy shoes and used it in a well aimed blow. Her guard pitched forward on his face and lay groaning. Carol extracted the cell key from his clenched fingers by using the heel of her shoe again. Then she backed out of the cell, locked the door and flung the key into the furnace.

WHILE she put the shoe back on her foot, she took in the situation at a glance. To risk passing through the upstairs part of the house was as foolish as it was impracticable. She headed for the cellar hatch, raised the hatch cover slightly and made sure no one observed her exit.

A minute later she was scampering between the tall, thickly branched trees. This path took her back to the beach. There was no escape there. Perhaps in the opposite direction, she might discover a highway and help. She skirted the big house, saw a huge, rifle-armed guard slowly pacing a beat and ducked just in time to avoid being spotted.

Then minutes later she stood on another bench, and slowly the full realization came to her that this was an island, so far off the mainland that no lights were visible. Swimming back was out of the question, and how could anyone hide on a tiny island infested with a score or more of armed spies?

If mental telepathy really did exist, then Tony Quinn would come very soon. But Carol didn't believe too strongly in it. Tony Quinn, Butch and Silk were probably searching every likely spot where she might have been taken. Yet how would they ever discover that she was a prisoner on an island? Carol sat down on a stump and felt the full pangs of despair.

Then she heard a shout. It was taken up at points all about her. She heard men crashing through the brush. Her escape had been discovered. Carol jumped to her feet and plunged into the brush. There must be a boat somewhere along the water. If she could manage to reach it, there was a chance. Someone blundered close by and she hardly dared to breath. Men were talking and shouting, but she didn't understand German and derived no benefit

from their words. She did realize that they were forming a circle and grimly closing in. Flashlights parted the darkness and made escape all the more difficult and doubtful.

She stumbled over a thick branch, picked it up and in desperation ripped away the small branches to fashion a sort of club for herself. One of the men blundered close, swept the ray of his flash in a wide swathe and for an instant Carol was revealed. The man gave a lusty shout of triumph and charged.

Carol ducked to one side and, as the spy almost grabbed her, brought down the club. It whacked against his shoulder with enough force to make him drop his gun. Before he could recover his wits, the club came down once more. This time Carol aimed better and she broke the branch in half across the man's skull. He slid to the ground and lay very still, scarcely breathing.

Others were coming in answer to his shout. Carol seized the flashlight, masked its lens with her other hand and allowed only a tiny ray to filter between her fingers. Using this to sweep the ground, she found the gun dropped by the spy. With this heavy weapon in her little fist she felt considerably better.

Now she changed her entire tactics. Instead of running like a hare before the hounds, she turned back and headed straight toward the big house. She reasoned that practically every man would be hunting for her and that might leave the spy master alone. No one had ever found it necessary to teach Carol resourcefulness. That had been born and bred into her. The heavy gun was making her hand tired, but she clung to it, her small jaws grimly planted together, senses attuned for any sight or sound of a guard.

THE cellar hatchway yawned wide open. Probably the spies had searched the cellar first and used this door as an exit. She slipped inside. Reaching the cellar door that led into the first floor corridor was a simple task. She turned the knob very slowly, opened the door a crack and peered out. Risking everything, Carol began moving toward the various rooms leading off the hall.

She heard the sound of measured strides, as if a man paced the floor monotonously. Carol pulled back a drape. In a lighted room she saw a man, hands clenched behind his back, head lowered, striding back and forth as though trying to wear a path in the rug. Carol slipped up behind him.

"Don't move or give a signal!" she warned. "Starve me to death, will you? Not a word! Walk over to that closet door, open it and step inside! Keep your hands up!"

The man was white as paper and he obeyed her orders to the letter without a word. He backed into the closet. Carol knocked a hat off a hook and kicked it toward him.

"Pick it up," she ordered.

The man bent down, and Carol smacked him across the back of the head with her gun butt. Then she shoved him inside the closet, closed the door and locked it. What to do next was a problem. Then she heard heavy footsteps. At least three men were coming into the house by way of the front door.

Carol ducked behind a big chair that hid her slim body very well. She almost gave a cry of horror when he saw who was being led into the room. Butch, his face matted with blood, marched before two of the scowling guards. They had guns drilling into the small of his back.

CHAPTER XV
The Missing Man

FORCED over against the wall, Butch O'Leary waited. His two guards stepped back with leveled guns. Suddenly it came to Butch what a fool he'd been—thinking he could invade this island alone when he should have known there would be a score of desperate men on it.

Three minutes after he slipped out of a dory and waded ashore, they had him. Now it looked very much like the finish of everything. These men had appointed themselves his official execution squad.

"Drop your guns!" a woman's voice ordered crisply. The two spies turned and gaped, but they let go of their weapons. Carol stepped from behind the chair and waved to Butch. His swollen lips parted in a huge grin. He hitched up his pants a notch, rubbed his face with a big hand and then stepped toward the two spies. His hands shot out, grabbed each man by the nape of the neck and brought their heads together with a crack. Both spies slumped to the floor.

"Nice goin,' Carol," Butch grinned. "Where's the rest of this mob? They walloped me with their guns and I feel like socking a few guys to make up for it."

"Butch—did you come alone?" Carol asked.

Butch nodded. "Yeah. I had a little talk with the guy who snatched you. He told me about this place so I just moseyed over here. But before I left, I phoned the party you're thinking of, and told him where you was. All we got to do is hold out until he shows up."

Carol motioned toward the guns on the floor. "Take them and don't be afraid to use them. These men are killers, every one. Maybe we can hold out."

The stooped, wizened man who had been appointed Carol's jailor suddenly shuffled by the door and glanced inside. He gave a leap, a howl of

fear, and raced for the door, calling the others. Butch surged into the hallway, seized the man and flung him completely across the porch.

Guns cracked and bullets whizzed by Butch's ear. He ducked, slammed the door shut and then broke a small window beside it. He thrust one weapon through the shattered glass and squeezed the trigger a few times. The shooting outside died away miraculously.

Carol ran to the rear of the house and took up a stand. She saw three men slinking forward, fired just above their heads and watched them dash for a safer spot. But Carol wasn't kidding herself. She and Butch couldn't possibly hold out for very long, Unless the Bat came promptly, they'd be killed. Those spies would show little mercy now.

Dimly she made out the forms of two more men carefully making their way toward the side of the house. They crouched behind a tree, held guns ready and were looking for a target. To shoot in their direction Carol could have to rush to another side of the house and leave the rear unguarded. Butch was busy at the front.

Then Carol saw a dark form suddenly sail through the sir. It looked like a giant bat with ribbed wings spread in a soaring flight. She saw one of the men go down and stay there. The other tried to raise his gun. There was an explosion and a streak of fire from beside the object that looked like a bat. The spy doubled up and his gun fell from limp fingers. Three men at the back of the house wheeled and raced in the direction of the shot. Carol pumped a bullet toward them. They paused and in doing so spelled doom for themselves. An avalanche of fury surged from behind a bush. This man was smaller than any of his antagonists, but he fought like a demon. Then the winged man joined in the fight. Two minutes later the three spies lay inert. The slightly built man and the eerie figure with hood and wings rushed toward the back door. Carol unlocked it, held it wide, and they catapulted in. Carol rushed into the Bat's arms. He held her close for a moment or two. Then he signaled Silk to go upstairs and cover the west side of the house.

Butch wheeled, gave a shout of welcome and at the same time issued some news. "Say, Boss, these guys have had enough. No kiddin', I can see them running like crazy guys right down to the water. Want I should go after 'em?"

"Stay with Carol," the Bat told him. "Silk, come back down here quickly."

Silk and the Bat raced out into the night. They noticed that the men with whom they had fought were gone—all but one and he seemed to be dead. They could hear the others splashing into the sea. The Bat topped a small knoll overlooking the ocean and he gave vent to a gasp of astonishment. All the spies on the island were swimming madly—straight toward Europe.

"They're crazy," Silk panted. "They're headed in the wrong direction."

"Listen, Silk," the Bat said and motioned for silence. He raised the hood over one ear and his acute hearing detected a soft purring sound and then the swish of water.

"Silk," he said slowly, "there's a submarine out there. That's what those men are headed for. Back to the house. They may shell this island. I have a power launch on the lee side. The water between the island and the mainland is too shallow for a sub to navigate. Step on it!"

The Bat started down the knoll, but as he did so, the sub's motors grew stronger than ever. The Bat peered straight out into the darkness that covered the ocean. To his amazingly keen sight, the darkness parted and revealed a huge, long-distance cruising sub above the surface with men crawling over her hull and hurrying toward the tiny deck. The Bat called to Silk and stayed there, watching. The turret hatch slammed shut. The sub moved out into deeper water and nosed under.

"They're afraid we're here in force," the Bat told Silk. "They won't return. Now let's find out what Carol has learned."

Butch had some highly significant news.

"Gosh, Boss," he addressed the Bat, "the cellar is packed to the ceiling with all kinds of stuff. Food, gasoline, cans of oil and a lot of clothes. Maybe they were goin' to stay here for a couple of years, huh?"

"Wrong, Butch," the Bat said. "This island was being turned into a refueling base for Nazi subs. I don't think they used it before this particular time, but it's an ideal spot. Now let's search this place thoroughly."

CAROL moved toward the closet door. "I have a surprise for you, darling. Inside that closet is the ringleader of this whole business. I caught him redhanded and I hope I broke his skull. Telling me I could talk or starve to death."

The Bat gasped. "Silk! Butch! Get out of the room. I don't want this man to see you. Carol, he interviewed you. In darkness, I suppose. That means he hasn't had a good look at your face, either. I don't want anyone to be able to identify you three later on as aides of mine. Keep undercover until I wrap up our friend for delivery."

The Bat drew his gun, took the key which Carol handed him and walked up to the closet door. He turned the lock open, yanked the door wide and stepped back.

"Come out of there—and remember I'll shoot if you so much as turn a hair."

A man staggered out of the closet, caressing his skull and groaning. He straightened up, his mouth opened wide and his eyes grew round and terror-filled as he looked at the hooded, caped figure standing before him. But his awed look was matched by the Bat under that hood.

It was Fisk!

"Sit down," the Bat ordered. "How did you get here?"

"Who-who are you?" Fisk quavered. "I've been through so much these last few days that I think I've gone crazy. You can't be real, or is this another one of your damned tricks?"

"Calm yourself," the Bat urged. "Tell me how you got here."

Something in the quality of the Bat's voice inspired Fisk to trust him.

"I saw those two men sitting there—dead. Dead, I tell you, and nobody had even been near them! I lost my head and ran away because I'd received threats that if I didn't resign from the Society Americana, I'd be dead, too. So I ran away. I stopped at my bank, cashed a check and then came here to my island."

"Your island?" the Bat asked in surprise.

"Yes. It's been mine for years. I built this house on it. I thought I'd be safe here, but those men must have been using my island for weeks. I don't know who they were, but they took me prisoner the moment I landed and almost killed me. Then a girl put a gun against my back, forced me into the closet and hit me over the head. If much more of this happens, I'll go stark mad."

"Compose yourself," the Bat said. "To ease your mind, I'll tell you this: I am the Black Bat! Your island was taken over by spies and sailors from a Nazi submarine. They intended to use it as a base. In your cellar are food and fuel to supply raiding subs. Now let me get this straight: tell me everything that happened from the moment you arrived at the meeting of the society. Lockhart made a statement that you knew part of what Sloane and Collier were going to reveal. Is that true?"

"Yes, I do, but it wasn't enough. I don't know who the leader of the spy ring was. They just told me what this fiend had up his sleeve. That's why I knew they'd try to kill me next. I couldn't help anybody much, and anyhow Lockhart knows everything that I do. Didn't he tell?"

"Lockhart is presumably dead," the Bat explained. "Now get on with it, please."

"Lockhart, too? My God! I met Lockhart before the rest of the members showed up. He told me that after this meeting we would all be famous and held as public benefactors. Sloane and Collier had found out that the spies are all ready to blow up every munitions and airplane factory in the whole United States, that battleships will be sabotaged, merchant shipping blown to smithereens. Oh—it was awful listening to them.

"Then Lockhart showed me the pocket watch he was wearing. First time I ever saw him with one. Seems that Sloane gave it to him—"

"A pocket watch!" the Bat broke in. "What happened to it?"

FISK heaved a sigh. "At least, I know that's safe. Lockhart gave it to me, told me to guard it with my life. I still can't see what a pocket watch has to do with all this, but I realized from Lockhart's manner that it must be very important. So, when I stopped at the bank to draw some cash, I also put the watch in my vault."

"Then you can turn it over to me?" the Bat asked.

"Why not?" Fisk answered. "All I have to do is open my vault at the Security National Bank."

"Stay here!" the Bat ordered. He hurried into the corridor and signaled Carol, Butch and Silk into another room.

"Fisk may be telling the truth. All of you heard his story and he really looks as though he's been through a lot. Fisk has the mysterious watch we've heard so much about. There are two power launches beached on the leeward side of the island. You three take one and return to Burgoyne.

"Silk, you are to disguise yourself and meet Fisk in front of his bank—the Security National. I'll arrange it so he will turn over the watch to you. Carol, you helped to break up a vicious rendezvous that violates all the neutrality laws of the country. I'll notify the F.B.I. to come out here and take charge. Now all three of you, get away from here so Fisk can't ever say he can recognize any of the Bat's assistants. Leave me the speedboat. I'll have a look around here before I leave."

He watched them hurry away into the darkness and the Bat felt inordinately proud of them. They were as dependable as time itself.

The Bat looked in at Fisk, saw that he had relaxed against the cushions of a davenport and seemed to be sleeping, The Bat invaded one room after another, finding only more and more evidence that the island and this house had been turned into a supply base. But one room had only a long workbench in it. The Bat saw a pile of bricks on the floor. Everyone had been broken open and the inside gouged out. There was red brick dust everywhere.

He yanked open drawers, pulled the contents of supply cabinets onto the floor and discovered a maze of tools and several pieces of thick steel.

"Battleship armor plate," he told himself grimly. "And a lot of small holes have been drilled through

it, lengthwise. Why? What kind of devil's work was turned out here?"

He took along samples, roused Fisk, and they hurried away from the house. The fast speedboat was waiting, and they raced back toward the mainland.

"Go to a hotel," the Bat ordered Fisk. "Register under an assumed name. Tomorrow exactly at ten o'clock, go to your bank. Just stand around and you will be approached by a man who will identify himself to you as Mr. Mortimer Cambridge. Give him the watch and then return to the hotel. Don't forget, Fisk—Lockhart is supposed to be dead. Attempts were made to kill Hugh Brooks and Durrance. Fouquet was stabbed through the heart. These spies mean business and now that we have them on the run, they'll be desperate."

CHAPTER XVI
Mined Walls

DEAD tired, Tony Quinn slept until noon the next day. Silk brought early afternoon papers which contained a vivid story of how the Coast Guard had discovered an island within the lawful limits of United States waters being used as a submarine base. Quinn read the items only briefly for he had something much more important on his mind. Silk took a thin pocket watch out of his vest pocket and handed it to Quinn. It was the watch over which more than one man had lost his life.

Tony Quinn made a quick examination of the time piece and with every tick of its second hand he grew more and more puzzled. He checked the time with an electric clock. The watch was more than two hours slow.

"I set it, sir, at ten o'clock," Silk said. "Did it automatically. I hope nothing's wrong."

"You set it at ten o'clock?" Quinn rubbed his chin in thought. "What kind of a valuable watch loses two hours every three hours? There's nothing inside that is at all significant, Silk. Unless you call deliberately filing away the serial numbers of the movement. That's not significant—it's foolish, because anyone can bring them out again. We'll try. Any more of those mysterious explosions or any theory as to what caused them?"

"No, sir," Silk said. "Nothing. I don't like to remind you, sir, but have you forgotten that all of us are in considerable danger? Someone entered the laboratory and destroyed the model of that factory, you know."

"I haven't forgotten," Quinn said grimly, "but I'm not as worried about it as I was before. What we must do immediately is to trace this watch and find out what bearing it has on the case, also just what made Rigby say there were watches that flew. This one hasn't any wings."

Quinn ate a quick breakfast and for the time being assumed his role of a blind man. Not until he was inside his laboratory did he drop that pose. There he carefully placed the watch on a small stand, turned a powerful light on it and made an examination of the scraped surface where the serial numbers had been. With a minute piece of cotton, soaked in a powerful acid, he carefully cleansed away the marks made by a sharp chisel.

Slowly the numbers came back. Not sharply, but enough so that they could be identified. Quinn called Silk, gave him a piece of paper bearing the numbers and ordered him to proceed to a safe spot, phone the watch manufacturer and find out to what jeweler this watch had been shipped.

While Silk was gone, Tony Quinn occupied his chair before the fireplace, his cane between his knees as he stared blankly into space. He could think best by assuming the pose of a blind man. He went over all the facts in the case. Fisk seemed out of it entirely. Lockhart, his fingerprints strewn all around, seemed to be the most logical suspect. It was a clever trick to substitute a corpse to account for his own death.

Hugh Brooks seemed to have something on his mind, too, and Durrance certainly rated a careful investigation. The matter of that explosion in the secret lab was gradually becoming clearer to Quinn. He needed only one piece of evidence to convince him of the truth behind the spy ring, and there wasn't much time to lose. Still he had to wait until nightfall, for the Bat operated best in darkness.

Silk returned in a hurry. "This watch, along with ninety-nine others exactly like it, was shipped to Leander the Jeweler. I pretended to be Lieutenant McGrath, sir, and they gave me all the information I wanted. They remembered the case because Leander called up and wanted that big lot shipped by special messenger. Looked like he had orders for the whole bunch of 'em."

TONY QUINN arose. "Get the towncar out, Silk. We're going for a drive. I want a look at Leander's place. I may want to invade it after hours."

"Case the joint, eh?" Silk grinned.

Traffic policemen recognized Tony Quinn's car and saluted it even though they were sure Tony Quinn couldn't see them do it. Silk usually waved in answer. They were stopped for a traffic light at a busy intersection when a police car, siren screaming, weaved in and out of traffic. Quinn's staring eyes betrayed no surprise or interest, but they had observed Lieutenant McGrath riding that

cruiser and where McGrath went, trouble must have arrived only seconds before. Quinn leaned forward.

"Follow the police car, Silk. Let's see what's going on?"

They soon saw. One obliging patrolman let Quinn's car through the blocked-off area. Before a jewelry store bearing a sign, "Leander, the Jeweler," was parked McGrath's car. While Quinn watched, he saw a morgue wagon roll up. Silk stopped right behind McGrath's cruiser and when the detective-lieutenant emerged, he grimaced, walked up to the towncar and put one foot on the runningboard.

"Interesting, ain't it, Mr. Quinn?" he said. "Ever see a place cleaned out like that joint was?"

"I'm sorry," Quinn replied softly. "You'll have to describe what's happened. My eyes aren't at their best this morning."

McGrath flushed, scratched his neck in embarrassment and talked. "This jewelry store was just stuck up and the guy who owns it was knocked off. They put a forty-five slug between his eyes for no reason at all. The poor guy was even handing the stuff out of the safe when they let him have it. Six masked hoods, but we'll get a line on 'em soon. They swiped every record of every sale he'd made in the last couple of years."

"Then it should be a simple case," Quinn said. "Perhaps Leander was a fence and those crooks had it in for him. I hope you find them, Lieutenant."

As Silk slowly backed away, McGrath added significantly, "I don't know how you guess them things, Mr. Quinn, but Leander was a fence and a high-class one. He'd buy or sell anything, including a guy's gold teeth, if there was two cents' profit for him."

Quinn leaned back against the cushions of his car during the ride home. His agile mind was working at a mile-a-minute clip. How had the spy ring acted so swiftly? How had they realized that the Bat had learned the source of their mysterious watch? The jeweler had been murdered for one reason—to shut him up. Quinn tapped Silk on the shoulder.

"I think I'd like a long ride this afternoon. Know the way to Burgoyne? That's the place where I sent Carol and Butch. I want to look at that factory just as soon as it's dark. Then back to town for a night of hard and dangerous work. I brought along another set of pictures you took of that model factory. Lucky we still had the negatives. My other equipment is under me. I'm sitting on it."

Silk let out a war whoop of laughter.

"And McGrath stood there, two feet away from the evidence he's been wanting for months. Would he be burned up if he knew it!"

SHORTLY after dark, the Bat and Silk were huddled behind one of the small outlying supply sheds which were part of the Acme Dye Works. The Bat studied the photographs which Silk had taken, without the aid of light.

"There was a reason why those tiny bricks in that model were removable," he said softly. "Of course, the model didn't have nearly as many bricks as the factory walls we're looking at now, but I have a plan. About two feet from the ground, along the northwest corner of the building we ought to discover an interesting state of affairs. Let's see."

They made their stealthy way forward. Ever since the spy ring had raided the place, more guards had been assigned, but they centered their attentions on entrances and exits. The Bat and Silk were concealed in the shadows of a corner where there wasn't even a window. The Bat picked up a small stone, gently tapped each brick, starting from the one nearest the ground. He kept one ear glued against the bricks as he tapped them and finally he gave a satisfied nod.

The Bat used a small piece of steel to cut carefully into the mortar that surrounded one brick; at last it slid out into his hand.

"Take a look at that niche in which the brick rested," Quinn said, "Someone cut the original brick out of the wall, very thoroughly cleaned the hole it made and then slid this other brick inside. Wait, and you'll see something else that will surprise you."

Silk, hindered by the darkness, could only see that the Bat carefully rotated this red clay brick in his hands, holding it close to his eyes. Then he grunted, gave a wrench and the brick broke in half. Something spilled out on the ground.

"An explosive," the Bat whispered to Silk. "This entire factory is mined. Bricks have been removed from strategic places and replaced with prepared bricks containing that mixture fifty-four so that when the explosion comes, the whole plant will be completely wrecked. An engineer planned this, a sapper did the work, and a disciple of the devil himself originated the idea. They first made a model of this factory—as you have seen. Then they tackled the real thing. Heaven knows how many more plants are mined in exactly the same way."

"But how do they set it off?" Silk asked hoarsely. "If the explosive is inside of a brick, or inside those thick chunks of armor plate which you found on the island, there doesn't seem to be any way to make contact with the explosion."

The Bat dumped the explosive powder out of the brick, put the two pieces back together and shoved it into its place in the wall. Only a careful inspection would reveal that it had been tampered with.

He spread the powder over a considerable area so that in case an attempt was made, it would burn instead of exploding. He covered it with dirt, then motioned Silk to follow. They headed toward the small house where Karl had lived before Butch decided to take a hand in his affairs.

"You asked how they can set off the explosive," the Bat said. "I wish I knew, Silk. However, one fear is gone out of my mind at any rate. No one invaded our secret laboratory. The spies knew that if their model of the Acme plant was examined, their whole scheme might come to light. The model was mined just like the original, as we saw a moment ago.

"The spies must have some kind of a radio impulse or a ray to which this particular explosive responds. They simply toured the town and turned the ray on every place where the model might have been hidden. They probably picked our place because Rigby had talked to me and they knew I was a friend of Commissioner Warner.

"Remember how those gasoline stations and hardware stores blew up? They happened to fall under the influence of that ray or impulse. It seems to have the power of passing through inert substance and exploding gasoline and powder. The hardware stores were hit because the ammunition they carried went off."

HIS valet gave a soft sigh of relief. "Then nobody knows Tony Quinn is the Bat. Gosh, I couldn't sleep nights thinking we were sunk. What's this shack we're heading for, sir?"

"Karl Hannemann, the spy, lived here until Butch turned him over to the authorities. I want a look at his possessions. Let's see what we can do with the lock."

Two minutes' work, and the Bat had the door open. A search had already been made of the place, but the Bat looked for one particular object and he found it—buried beneath a pile of clothing in a bureau drawer. It was a watch, the replica of the one Fisk had turned over. It was still ticking, and it ran almost four hours late. The Bat thrust the watch into his pocket, spent ten minutes looking for other evidence and then gave up.

CHAPTER XVII
Dead Man's Mansion

VERGING onto ten o'clock, Silk was driving his blind master through the city street and heading back toward Quinn's residence. He helped Quinn out of the car and escorted him to the door. Silk unlocked it, turned on lights and they disappeared within the house. Anyone who watched would have caught a brief glimpse of Tony Quinn, cane extended, making his way across the big living room. Quinn found his usual chair, sat down and leaned back, like a man tired from a long ride.

In reality he was thinking hard. The Acme Dye plant was menaced. It could be blasted into complete ruin at the whim of the unknown spy leader. There probably were several hundred other factories similarly treated and threatened. It was no longer enough to capture the spy leader and round up his gang. The location of every mined factory must be obtained. The method by which the explosion was to be set off became a matter of vast importance.

Silk drew down the curtains and Quinn examined the watch he had taken from Karl's house. The serial numbers had been scratched away, similar to the one Fisk had turned over. It lost time much too fast to be an effective timepiece. Posting Silk on guard near the door in case someone approached, Quinn went into his laboratory.

He dropped the mask of blindness completely, thrust a jeweler's glass into his eye and held the watch under a strong light. He noticed that the tiny screws had been tampered with and the metal that protected the works had been gouged. No jeweler would have done this. The watch Fisk had turned over had been similarly marked. Quinn removed the glass from his eye, leaned back his chair and frowned. For some reason both of these watches had been tampered with and by inexperienced hands.

He had a set of very small tools and fell to work, removing the screws from the watch and revealing its small springs and gears in motion. Yet nothing seemed to be wrong. Nothing extraneous was hidden within the works, there were no messages engraved on any part of the shiny surface.

"If these watches do carry some kind of a message," he reasoned, "it must be very brief and engraved in such small letters that even a jeweler's glass won't detect them. That doesn't seem possible. There is something else—there must be."

Then he gave a grunt of elation and attacked the screw holding the main spring in place.

"If both watches run slow, it's because of the spring," he told himself grimly. "And the mainspring is the only possible place on which a reasonably lengthy message could be written."

The spring flew out of its position. Quinn gently disengaged it, pinned one end on his bench with a weight and then carefully uncoiled it. His amazingly acute eyesight noticed faint scratches on the hard surface of the spring. He seized the jeweler's glass, screwed it into his eye and gave a low, drawn out whistle as tiny letters became very distinguishable to him.

They didn't make sense for they were in some kind of a complicated code. Quinn carefully put all parts of the watch into an envelope and placed this in his safe. He began removing his tweeds and getting his black regalia ready as he called to Silk.

"Stand by," he ordered. "Have Carol and Butch ready, too. We've almost reached the end of our spy trail, Silk. One or two more details and I'll have our man, expose his methods and prevent a holocaust of terror from taking place. I don't believe Lockhart is alive after all. If he isn't, then I have a clear idea as to who is behind this."

"But where are you going, sir?" Silk asked.

"To the home of Lockhart, who is supposed to be dead. I know a way to settle that problem right now. Find the fingerprint cards which I worked on. I'll need them."

HOODED and caped, the Black Bat emerged into the night through the high, thick hedge. He approached the Lockhart house very carefully and crouched to become a part of the night shadows as two men swung around one corner of the house. They were probably members of Joe Allen's detective agency, assigned to protect the property of a client whose life they had failed to save.

He waited until they were out of sight, slipped forward quietly and tackled one of the windows. He had it open quickly, hoisted himself to the sill and swung into the big living room. He closed and locked the window after him. His eyes penetrated the darkness easily and he knew exactly what he was looking for.

His crepe-soled shoes allowed him to cross the room without making a sound. He studied the wall intently. Even in the darkness he could see that one small area of wall just below a molding seemed smudged. This was in contrast to the rest of the house which was kept very immaculate.

The Bat's fingers passed lightly over that section of wall, slipped beneath the paneling and discovered that one small section of the wood gave way under pressure. There was a click and a panel slid back to reveal a concealed wall safe. He scanned the surface of the safe and saw myriad scratches in the hard steel. There were several smudges on it, too, He removed a compact fingerprint outfit from beneath his cloak, turned the muzzle of a small billows on the safe and sprayed a powder on it. The smudges became clearly outlined fingerprints.

He studied these prints and compared them with the impressions he had taken from other sources in this same house. They matched. There was no similarity between these prints and the ones taken from the fingers of the dead man at the morgue, identified as Lockhart.

The Bat's face was grim beneath his hood. He made certain that his presence in the house was still unknown to the guards outside and anyone who might be within. Then he pressed an ear against the safe door, removed the silk glove from one hand and gently touched the dial with his finger tips. The combination of his abnormally acute hearing and the sensitiveness of his fingers that months of blindness had brought on worked beautifully.

In ten minutes the safe door swung open. He hastily wiped the door of the safe until all possibility of leaving his own prints had been removed. Both hands gloved again, he peered into the circular, steel-lined vault. There was a metal box resting on a small shelf. He removed this carefully, touching only the corners of it. Again he used the tiny billows to spray powder on the dark surface of this steel box. More fingerprints came out clearly.

The Bat hardly dared to breathe as he began checking these. First he compared them with the prints he had taken from Lockhart's chromium-plated carafe, his silver-backed brushes and various bottles from his medicine cabinet. The prints did not compare. Next he checked them with the fingerprints taken from the dead man in the morgue. They checked, and instantly the whole thing clicked in the Bat's mind.

He put the metal box back into the safe, closed the door and spun the combination. He slid the panel back in place, mopped up traces of fingerprint powder that had fallen to the floor and then looked around for an exit.

SUDDENLY a challenging voice sent him scurrying for cover. Someone was on the front porch. Joe Allen's private detective guards were probably denying the visitor admission. Then Lieutenant McGrath's voice rose in anger.

"You've seen my badge. You punks ought to know me by sight, anyhow. I'm going into that house without a search warrant and you birds won't stop me. I have a job to do and it's going to be done. Now get out of my way before I call the wagon and have the whole bunch of you thrown in the can."

The front door opened, lights clicked on and there three men stepped into the hall. Behind him came two of Joe Allen's burly detectives. McGrath turned, put the heel of his palm against the chest of the foremost private dick and pushed him out of the house with his companion. He closed the door and locked it.

From a corner of the still darkened living room, the Bat watched McGrath give orders to a slim young man who carried a fingerprint outfit. The third man was Igoe, of the F.B.I.

"I'm not satisfied that Lockhart is dead," growled McGrath. "Why? Because the Black Bat

came to the morgue for a very good reason. The only thing I can figure out is he wanted the fingerprints of the corpse. If he thinks maybe that corpse isn't Lockhart's body, I think the same thing. Dolan, look around and get samples of all the prints you can find."

The fingerprint man scurried upstairs. McGrath slumped into a chair, shoved his hat to the back of his head and scowled.

"You know, Mr. Igoe, the whole case has me buffaloed. I don't know what to make of it. Fisk is missing. Durrance's house got blown apart and he's gone. Somebody drove a knife through Pouquet's heart. Looks to me as though every member of the Society Americana is headed for the grave, if they're not there already. I wonder what the Black Bat knows about this mess. Sometimes I like that guy, but one day I'm putting him where he belongs. I wonder why Dolan hasn't made any noise upstairs?"

Igoe walked to the bottom of the steps and peered up.

"Dolan?" he called. "Dolan, are you all right?"

No answer. Igoe gave an exclamation and rushed up the stairs. For a moment he was lost in the darkness. Then McGrath heard a gentle sigh, a crash, and Igoe came rolling down the steps to sprawl unconscious on the landing. There was a huge, rapidly swelling lump on the side of his head and blood oozed out to mat his hair.

McGrath yanked a gun out of a hip holster, drew a flashlight with the other hand and turned the beam up the staircase. There was no sign of anyone. He crept up the stairs, gun extended, finger white against the trigger. At the top he hesitated, torn between two directions, both dark and none too inviting. He decided to turn left.

As he came around the corner and into the corridor that ran lengthwise across the upstairs part of the house, a hand swept out of the darkness, crashed against McGrath's left arm and sent the flashlight rolling across the floor. Its beam flickered in all directions for the switch stayed on. There was a shot from one of the rooms and the flashlight went out with a clatter of shattered metal and glass.

McGrath fired three times straight into that room, but drew no cry of pain. He was sweating profusely as he knew this was probably the most dangerous spot he'd even been in. To make matters all the worse he didn't stand a chance of summoning help. To retreat now, even hunt for a telephone, was to give these gunmen the opportunity they sought to shoot him down.

McGRATH set his back against the wall and kept staring down the corridor. But he couldn't watch both ends of the hallway at the same time. There were two forms slinking toward him, edging their way along the wall with guns half-raised and ready to throw lead. The foremost of the two signaled his companion that he could handle things. He crooked his elbow, supported the gun across that arm and took careful aim, getting McGrath's head squarely in the eights.

McGrath heard the killer's hoarse breathing and started to turn around. There was a single shot, but not from the killer. It came from somewhere downstairs. An expert marksman had fired straight through inky darkness to find a perfect target. The killer stared at his bleeding, numbed hand as his gun clattered to the floor.

"Reach!" McGrath rasped.

Then there were footsteps behind him. He was trapped now. A gun butt swished by his head as he ducked. But the blow landed against his right shoulder with almost bone-shattering force. McGrath groaned. The next blow would get him on the head and that would be the end of all things.

Then McGrath saw an amazing thing happen. A form moved through the darkness, leaped, and to McGrath's astounded senses the figure seemed to be that of a huge bird. He heard the sound of a very human fist striking against a jawbone. He saw one of the attackers go down to stay.

McGrath gave a yelp of delight, clubbed his pistol and sailed into the fight himself. Two minutes later a door slammed downstairs. McGrath wiped sweat off his face and turned around.

"I'm grateful, Bat," he said. "Don't think I'm not. Those birds would have polished me off in about one more minute."

"They may do it yet," the Bat whispered. "Dolan, your fingerprint man, is dead. I found his body in one of the bedrooms. We've got to find out what he saw that made his death so necessary. Igoe is unconscious, but he'll live—if they didn't kill him on their way out."

McGrath tried to turn on the light switch in the hall, but there was no response.

"I blew the fuses," the Bat explained. "Stay close to me and I'll lead the way. We'll search the room were Dolan was murdered."

McGrath laughed softly, but there was no mirth in it. "Funny—I'm holding a gun in my hand and I could drill you right through the back if I wanted. For months I've been waiting for a chance like this and now that it's come, I can't take advantage of it. Let's get going."

DOLAN lay in a crumpled heap on the floor. He had been apparently struck over the head and then stabbed. McGrath knelt beside him and felt in vain for a pulse beat. The Bat stood near an open window.

Suddenly he leaned out of it and picked up a small white object from the slanted roof outside. As he drew back, a gun cracked somewhere in the darkness below. The bullet smacked against the window sill and the Bat hastily ducked out of the way.

"They're still down there," he told McGrath, "so if we intend to get out of here, we need help. That's rather embarrassing for me because you can't very well get out of putting the cuffs on my wrists if your men appear."

"Never mind that," McGrath growled, "What did you lean out of the window and risk your life for?"

The Bat stepped close to McGrath. "You can't see it, but I hold a single feather in my hand. It's mottled, brown and white. This, McGrath, tells me a complete and interesting story. Now get downstairs and phone. I'll take my chances on running a blockade of police."

"But we don't know why Dolan was killed yet," McGrath protested. "Before a bunch of flatfeet run all over the place, we ought to look for clues."

McGrath felt a firm hand close over one wrist and he was pulled in the direction of the hallway. "I know why, Mac. Those spies may also realize that I guessed their secret and, if so, they'll storm this place until both of us are dead. I guarantee that. Get on the phone before they think of cutting the wire."

McGrath allowed the Bat to lead him down the steps. They crossed the reception hall and headed toward a study where there was a phone. Suddenly a barrage of guns let go outside. Voices were raised, and feet pounded on the porch.

CHAPTER XVIII
The Bat Vanishes

RAPIDLY a familiar voice shouted. "Lieutenant, let me in. It's Joe Allen. Quick! There's a small army of killers loose on this estate."

McGrath sprang to the door, unlocked it and Joe Allen came barging into the hall. There were four men with him, all with drawn guns in their hands. McGrath tried to close the door. From the darkness outside came flashes of fire. Someone had a submachine gun and was sending a hail of death straight into the hallway.

The Bat, who had drawn away toward the stairs when the shooting began, felt a slug whistle by his head. He dodged to one side and headed for the dining room door. As he swept through it, three burly forms leaped at him. While the machine gunner had kept the occupants of the house busy at the front door, other gunmen had broken in at the rear.

McGrath managed to slam the front door shut and throw the latch. He swerved around, saw the three men diving for the Bat and he started shooting. At the same moment the Bat's gun roared. One of the attackers went down on his knees and stayed there a moment before he plunged face forward on the floor.

Another, already launched in a flying dive toward the Bat, couldn't check his rush and although the Bat jumped aside with amazing speed, one of the attacker's arms curled around the Bat's leg. Both of them hit the floor with a thump that shook the house.

The third killer gave a shout of elation, calling upon his cohort to move aside so he could put a bullet into this fantastic creature whose life seemed to be charmed.

Impeded by the darkness, McGrath had to fire blindly. The third killer danced back a few steps, still concentrating his attention on the Bat. He also had difficulty in distinguishing friend from foe. He saw a form rise from the floor. It was a man with what seemed to be wings for arms. The spy deliberately pumped three slugs into the form. It hurled sideward and then collapsed.

McGrath saw and uttered a shout of rage. All his hatred for the Bat was gone now. He charged across the room. The escaping spy seemed to know his way around for he dodged into the kitchen and pushed a chair directly in front of the doorway. McGrath tripped over it to fall heavily, breaking the chair to pieces. He floundered around, regained his feet and staggered on toward the rear door. Two of Allen's men were circling the house. Both had flashlights. He hailed them.

"Lend me one of your lights," McGrath ordered. "Then stand guard at this door. Where's Allen?"

"Looking for the gang of spies," the operative reported. "That's what we're all doing. And the cops are on the way, Lieutenant. I can hear the sirens."

McGrath grunted, snapped on the flash and made his way back into the dining room. He knew what he'd find—the body of the Black Bat. McGrath was positive that he had seen the eerie, winged form of his troublesome enemy rise from the floor only to be pumped full of bullets.

"Whoever he is," McGrath said grimly, "I'll hide him if he isn't dead. I owe him that much."

He slowly turned the ray of the light toward the spot where the Bat had dropped, and then he stared. There was no one there, not even the spy with whom the Bat had been fighting. There was some blood—drops of it leading to an open window. McGrath was certain that window hadn't been open a moment ago. The Bat's body had completely vanished!

BRAKES screeched outside. A veritable horde of uniformed police poured into the house. Joe Allen with five of his men pushed his way through the crowded hallway to McGrath's side.

"What the devil happened?" he asked. "I had four men posted here on special duty to guard Lockhart's estate. One of 'em phoned that you had insisted on going in. While he talked to me on the phone, he heard shooting so I came down with all the men I had handy."

"I don't know what happened," McGrath growled. "Dolan, one of the men from the fingerprint department, was murdered. Igoe, a G-man, was knocked on the head. Better get a doctor for him. Looks like we stumbled into something big, but so far I have no idea what it was."

"I have," Joe Allen said curtly. "You came here to look for fingerprints. You wanted to compare them with those of the body at the morgue. You needn't bother to look further, Lieutenant. That stiff is not Lockhart. We thought he was alive all along. He made fools out of all of us, especially me. Throw a dragnet out for him, McGrath. I'll put everyone of my men to work finding him, too."

McGrath nodded, "So you checked fingerprints, too, huh? Okay, Joe, I'll take your word for it that Lockhart's body isn't in the morgue. All of you mugs get out of here so I can search the joint. Somebody go down to the cellar and get the lights going. Send for the coroner and the morgue wagon. We'll sweep this estate from one end to the other. Look for footprints, blood stains, and listen—everyone of you—if you find anyone dead, don't touch him, understand? Call me first. That's all."

McGrath turned away. He saw something white on the floor and picked it up. Joe Allen moved away to give him more room, and McGrath straightened with a feather in his hand.

"The Black Bat found this on the roof," he said half aloud. "He said he knew what it meant, but—wait! He also said the feather he found was white and brown. This one is all white."

Joe Allen examined the feather. "Looks to me as though it might be a pigeon feather. What did the Bat mean by saying he knew what the feather signified?"

McGrath shook his head slowly. "I don't think we'll ever know, Joe. I saw one of those gunmen pump three slugs into him. I even heard the bullets smash into his flesh. There's a pool of blood on the floor where he fell."

"But where is the body?" Allen demanded.

McGrath shrugged. "I always had an idea the Bat worked with someone. His helper must have dragged him away to prevent us from slipping the mask off his face. Funny, isn't it, Joe, how you set your heart on doing something and then, when it's finished, you wish you'd never thought of it. That's how I feel about the Bat. He led me a merry chase, outwitted me a dozen times, and got me so mad I could have blazed away at him myself. Sure, he committed crimes on which a court would have had to convict him, but just the same the Bat worked on the right side."

JOE ALLEN nodded somberly. "I never had anything against him. Look here, Mac—we're in this thing over our heads. I was paid a fancy fee to protect the members of the Society Americana. I fell down on the job—bad. I wasn't ordered to put my men on duty around this house. I did it of my own accord, hoping I might trap someone. A few hours ago I went through this house with a dozen men helping me. We checked every damned spot where Lockhart might have left his prints.

"We found plenty of 'em, and none tally with the dead man's. Therefore Lockhart's whereabouts is our next move. He's alive. The body in the morgue is a substitute. You send out an alarm for him and so will I. I'm connected with a national organization of private detective agencies. I'll flash each member outfit a full description and put them to work. If I'm to save my own reputation, I've got to uncover the mugs who murdered my clients. Are you with me?"

McGrath silently shook hands with Allen and they left the house together.

CHAPTER XIX
The Bat Strikes

GATHERED in a room in another section of the city, thirty men were speaking in whispers. Suddenly someone snapped an order. The men straightened up and extended their right hands in a salute. A lone figure walked in from the doorway, stood behind a desk and answered the salute.

Then he spoke and every word dripped venom and hate.

"The day has come," he began. "We are prepared to strike and strike hard. The enemies of our Fatherland shall no longer obtain guns, ammunition, airplanes and tanks from the United States. With one blow we shall stop that and simultaneously bring the government of the United States to its knees before us. Eighty places are mined; twenty-one warships, from submarines to capital class battleships, are ready to be sunk.

"Our men, all over the country, stand ready to strike. And luck is with us. The only man whom we feared was the Black Bat. I announce with considerable pleasure that he is now dead. The man who

killed him is our own comrade, Schlenk, who will be properly rewarded at the right time."

The leader of the band stopped while his men growled satisfied oaths. Then he held up his hand for silence again.

"There are just two more tasks which must be done at once. The arsenal, which all of you know is already mined, is to be blown up to give these fools a taste of our power. Franz, that shall be your glory. Alone, equipped with one of our proton guns, you will ride close to the arsenal. Be sure you are not challenged by any sentries. The place is loaded to the roof with munitions. It will make a glorious explosion."

The man called Franz stepped out and drew himself erect. He bowed, clicked his heels and wheeled toward the door. Then he was gone on an errand of death and destruction.

The spy leader continued.

"Von Dahlka, you are appointed to handle the other task. There is this Fisk, who may know too much. He is staying at the Hotel Harvey on the eighteenth floor. There is a fire escape by his window. It would not be well if he lived to see the dawn."

Von Dahlka stepped forward and rendered homage. Then he, too, was gone. The spy leader smiled broadly, thrust a cigarette between his thin lips and sat down. His men silently filed out. Before the spy leader's gaze, the further wall became a vivid picture.

He was in the center of it, giving orders, acknowledging the salutes of fools who thought they could outwit him. There would be a few death sentences, too—all in good time. Within three hours it would be daylight and such a dawn the United States would never see again. Franz was already nearing the arsenal, the blowing up of which would start the series of terrific explosions.

BUT Franz, as he drove a cheap sedan out of the city, was far from being a brave man. Like all men of his particular character he was stolid and without much imagination, but tonight something seemed definitely wrong. He could almost sense the presence of someone nearby, somebody who meant him no good. He shivered, hunched over the wheel and pushed his foot down on the gas pedal. The sooner this was over with, the better.

Then an arm draped in black suddenly curled around his throat. Another hand grasped the wheel and turned the car off the road into a lane. Franz gurgled, his eyes rolling in terror. In the soft glow of the instrument panel light he saw a dreaded figure— the black hooded image of the man known as the Black Bat. The spy master had been mistaken. The Black Bat was not dead.

The car stopped with a jolt, but that circling arm remained tight. Franz tried to reach for a gun under his coat, but the black-gloved hand beat him to it. Franz made a frantic, squirming wriggle out of that choking embrace. He had the car door open in a flash, grabbed up the square, heavy box that reposed on the seat beside him, and leaped out. He was close enough to the arsenal for the rays of this machine to do their work. Franz began running madly across the uneven pastureland to escape his nemesis.

But behind him came the Bat—the hugest form Franz had ever seen in his life. Franz didn't know it, but this eerie figure was Butch in the Bat's regalia. The winged cape seemed to render the Bat capable of actual flight for he gained on Franz with an astounding speed. Franz gave a whimpering cry of terror. A huge hand came down to close around his throat. He suddenly discovered that his legs were still running madly, but they kicked through thin air for he was being held aloft. That was too much. Franz screamed and let go of the square box. His eyes glazed and he passed out.

AT approximately this same moment, Von Dahlke was crawling across the roof of the Hotel Harvey. He located the fire escape, peered over the edge and then crept down it silently. Locating the room in which Fisk stayed was easy.

Von Dahlke found the window open about an inch. He drew a gun, thumbed off the safety and prepared to shoot if his victim was aroused from sleep. As he slipped into the room, he smiled confidently. A man lay beneath the covers of the bed and he seemed to be fast asleep.

Von Dahlke put his gun away, removed a knife from a scabbard under his arm and decided to taunt his victim a bit. The loss of Fisk's island as a secret submarine base had been a serious blow, and Fisk probably had something to do with it. Better to let him know why he was being killed.

Von Dahlke seized the bed covers and yanked them off. At the same time he raised his knife to aim the point at his victim's throat But somehow the hand gripping the blade became frozen. As the bed covers came away, a black-clad, black-hooded man suddenly sat up and there was a very business-

like automatic in his fist. This was Tony Quinn, the real Black Bat.

"Gott in Himmel!" Von Dahlke screamed. "The Black Bat! But he is dead! It cannot be."

Von Dahlke didn't try to use the knife. He realized just how close he was to death at this moment. At a gesture from the gun, he backed toward the wall and raised his shaking arms so high that they ached in their sockets. The black-clad figure swung two very earthly and substantial legs off the bed, arose and calmly stowed the gun into a holster beneath the ribbed cape. Von Dahlke gaped at this action and decided to take a chance. He reached for his gun and actually managed to touch the butt with his fingertips before a terrific right hook slugged him on the point of the jaw. His head was violently thrown back, hit the wall and bobbed forward again only to meet that terrible fist once more. The killer spy slumped to the floor without a sound.

The Bat hoisted Von Dahlke to one shoulder, peered out of the window and then climbed to the fire escape. He slipped down it, unobserved, threw his limp burden into a car that was parked and ready in the courtyard behind the hotel and drove off.

LIEUTENANT McGRATH left Headquarters long after midnight. He was tired and uneasy. The breaks had been against him tonight. The death of the Black Bat depressed him more than anything else. He suddenly realized that with the Bat gone, a certain zest was simultaneously gone from his job.

As he walked along the quiet, suburban neighborhood toward his home, McGrath wondered if Tony Quinn would mysteriously vanish, or would Quinn be simply listed as having died a natural death? That is—McGrath puckered his lips thoughtfully—if Tony Quinn was the Bat.

At least McGrath would be sure of that point finally.

Again he visualized the grisly moment when the spy had fired point-blank at the body of the man whose cape was flung out like the wings of a gigantic bird. If the Bat had lived through the impact of those three slugs, he was no mortal man, and McGrath didn't believe in ghosts nor in any brand of super-men. The Bat was dead and that was all there was to it.

McGrath swung through the gate and stepped lightly up the path to his front door. Suddenly he stopped as though an invisible wall barred his way. His jaw dropped, his eyes grew round with amazement. There were two men seated on the steps of his front porch.

One rested limply against one banister post, his whole face swollen out of shape. The other lolled against the opposite post. Something had slammed with considerable force against his nose for it was bent in an absurd manner. One eye was completely closed and the other rapidly nearing the same condition. Each man was handcuffed to the porch, and each man wore the image of a bat pasted on his forehead just above the eyes! Franz and Von Dahlke.

Then McGrath took a closer look at the two men. He stepped up to them, opened their coats wide and muttered some rather uncomplimentary terms about his own stupidity. A private detective badge gleamed on the vest of each prisoner.

McGrath rushed into the house, grabbed the phone and called Commissioner Warner. Then he phoned Michael Igoe, learned that the local head of the F.B.I. suffered nothing more than a violent headache which some interesting news would quickly cure.

Without awakening his wife, McGrath extracted a fresh service pistol from a buffet drawer, thrust it into his pocket and took out his bunch of keys as he left the house. Two minutes after he had both men unhooked from the porch, a squad drove up and the prisoners were thrown into the back of it.

CHAPTER XX

The Image on the Wall

YAWNING, Joe Allen opened the door of his home, rubbed his eyes sleepily and started at the trio who faced him.

"Commissioner Warner! McGrath—and Igoe!" Allen exclaimed, snapping awake. "Come in! What's up?"

"Plenty," Warner said. "We need your help. If necessary, I'll even swear you in as a special officer. How much do you know about the men who belong to your organization, Allen?"

Allen shrugged. "As much as an employer who keeps about fifty people on his payroll, I guess. Some of the boys aren't the highest type mentally. They're hard-boiled, drink a lot, I suppose, and they're always broke. Why?"

"Because two of them are now under arrest charged with being members of this spy ring," Warner grunted. "Let's go inside and have this out. Good heavens, man—you've been in danger every single moment while fighting this bunch of saboteurs."

Joe Allen sank weakly into a chair. He gulped, reached for a cigarette and forgot to light it.

"They haven't admitted their guilt, naturally," Warner went on, "but we did some pretty rapid checking. They live under good American names, but their fingerprints show they are alien Germans, Franz Braun and Josef Von Dahlke, wanted by the Department of Labor for deportation. They have bad records indicating that they have been engaged in espionage work for years."

"Maybe," Allen said finally, reaching for the telephone, "I better do some big checking up. Look, Commissioner, I run my own outfit here, but I'm connected with a nationwide hookup of other agencies. Some of my boys were transferred from other points and were recommended by these out of town agencies. I'd better get in touch with each manager and have him look into the situation. How about it?"

Warner waved his hand. "Of course. That's why we came—to get your cooperation. You're not going to sit there and phone each one though, are you?"

Allen picked up the telephone and grinned. "No. All I have to do is call the telegraph office. They have a list on hand and they'll dispatch prepared wires to each man telling him to contact me at once. Let them spend the dough for cross-country calls."

Allen dialed the telegraph office. "This," he said, "is Peter Ehrmann. You will dispatch the prepared wires immediately. Thank you."

"Why the phony name?" Lieutenant McGrath asked promptly.

Allen shrugged. "I've had a feeling that I have been observed all through this case. So I used that name to throw any spies off the trail. Now let's plan some method of action. I'm open to any suggestion, gentlemen."

"If only the Bat were here," Warner said slowly. "You know, Allen, I definitely do not believe in ghosts, but if the Bat ever had any spiritual qualities after death, I'm sure he'd be here. Sheer nonsense, of course. I—what's wrong, Allen?"

Allen was crouched far back in his chair. His eyes were bulging, his nostrils flared out and he bared his teeth in a grimace of horror. His cigarette fell to the floor.

Warner, Igoe and McGrath whirled in the direction in which the private detective was staring.

ETCHED against the farther wall, like the work of a clever silhouette artist, was the image of a bat. A huge bat—as though the shadow had been cast through an enlarging lens. Allen suddenly came out of the chair in a beast-like spring. He reached for the pocket of his lounging robe, but as he passed by McGrath, the lieutenant stuck out a foot. Allen tripped over it, fell heavily and McGrath kicked the gun out of his grasp.

"Thank you, Lieutenant," the Bat's voice came from the other end of the room. Curtains fluttered and the Black Bat stepped out. He held a gun, but its muzzle slanted downward.

McGrath gave a grunt of disgust. "I might have known bullets wouldn't hurt you. Here I've been cursing myself for letting you get shot, even praising you in my mind. Well, you saved my life and I'm grateful. How did you save your own?"

The Bat chuckled softly. "The man you saw arise, with the cape over him, was the spy with whom I was fighting. I tried to twist my cape around his neck, but he jerked free and his pal shot him by mistake. I simply dragged the man away to give the impression that I was dead. I figured Joe Allen would begin his work in earnest then."

Commissioner Warner reached down and jerked Allen into a sitting position.

"So it is Allen. I wasn't sure because we had no evidence. If you say so, Bat, it's enough for me."

"He's the spy leader," the Bat said, "And he had one of the most perfect setups for espionage work I've ever seen. His agents were all well Americanized in speech and mannerisms. They were all licensed private detectives who could go almost anywhere under the protection of their badges. He had a nationwide organization and he communicated with them by means of carrier pigeons. I found evidence in the shape of feathers at Lockhart's home. They were bold enough to use the house of a dead man as a meeting place."

"So Allen dropped the white feather I picked up," said McGrath. "I thought so. Then Lockhart is really dead?"

The Bat nodded. "That is his body at the morgue. To throw everyone off balance, Allen had his men wipe away all fingerprints in Lockhart's home and substitute the prints of one of his own men. That same spy left the identical prints in a hideout where I found them. Until a short time ago I was sure that Lockhart was still alive and very possibly the spy leader. But I began to put things together.

"The case began with the deaths of Sloane and Collier. We know exactly how they were murdered. However, someone inserted those hypodermics into the back of their necks after they were dead. Only two men actually touched the bodies. Lockhart did when he went to see if they were really dead. Then Joe Allen rushed in and handled the bodies. Now if I could prove that Lockhart really was dead, he certainly could not be the spy leader and that left—Joe Allen."

"How did you find out?" Michael Igoe wanted to know.

"I looked for something which the spies might not have wiped clean of Lockhart's prints. There was a wall safe which they hadn't been able to open. I opened it and found Lockhart's prints on a metal box inside. That convinced me."

Warner swung around to face Allen. "Well," he asked, "Have you anything to say about all this?"

ALLEN smiled thinly and shrugged. "It's all foolishness. How do you even know that this hooded man really is the Bat? Maybe he's the spy leader giving you a lot of hooey to stall things. I tell you,

Commissioner, something big is in the air. This man, in my opinion, is merely holding you all up while his spies get in their dirty work. I'm not responsible if anything happens. Keep that in mind."

There was a soft laugh from the Bat. "If anything happens, Allen, I'll be greatly surprised. This house has been wired ever since I suspected you. I have recordings of your voice giving those spies orders to destroy the arsenal and kill Fisk. That's how they were circumvented and picked up.

"You were going to take care of Hugh Brooks and Durrance, too, like you took care of Fouquet. They were all dangerous men to your cause, spending vast sums to run down men like you. I needed only one thing tonight—the evidence which would enable me to secure the names and addresses of your far-flung spy organization, those equipped with the proton beam machines which would set off the mined buildings.

"You kindly furnished that when you phoned the telegraph office and gave them your false name. By now they have turned over to the F.B.I. the names and addresses to which those wires would have been sent. Before many hours are up, those men will have visitors they won't enjoy."

Allen slumped even lower in the chair and his eyes gleamed in mad hatred. The Bat looked down at him.

"Collier, Sloane or Rigby somehow gained possession of one of those watches. I suppose they overheard some of your men talking and they got the impression that the watches were being flown around the country by pigeon. I've discovered your true method of shipping them. You simply mailed each of your lieutenants a watch, minus the mainspring.

"You told each one simply to lay the watch aside until the mainspring arrived. It was to be inserted according to the instructions you furnished. On each mainspring, however, was engraved, in code, the instructions this particular lieutenant was to carry out when *Der Tag* came. Your coded wires, which have just been intercepted, give your lieutenants the key words to break down the code written on the springs.

"In that manner only you knew all of the places that were mined. If your lieutenants stumbled and were captured, they could give no important information because they knew none. The proton machines you use emanate a detonator ray which explode all munitions and gasoline in its path. It can penetrate walls because it has X-ray qualities.

"This device has not yet been perfected and I hope it never will be. Now its scope cannot be well controlled. That is why, when you went searching for the stolen factory model, you blew up stocks of munitions in hardware stores and supplies of gasoline at fuel stations. Each of your lieutenants was provided with one of these devices, but they will all be in the hands of G-men before tomorrow noon."

McGrath shook his head from side to side. "You get it all, Bat. I suppose Allan's guards, posted at the doorway of the Society Americana, killed Lockhart, bashed in his face and flung him out of the window."

The Bat answered quietly. "That's right. And Allen, looking out of the window, identified the body thirty-two stories below. Quite a feat. When I heard about it I wondered. Fisk went to an island which he owned. Very few people even knew of its existence, but Allen did. Fisk had told him about it, because Fisk believed in Allen. He even phoned him after I warned him not to contact anyone. Under Allen's clever questioning, Fisk must have even told him about the watch.

"Therefore Allen murdered the jeweler and arranged Fisk's death. I got him out of his room barely in time. He's all right now. There were several traps set for me and my suspicions were aroused against both Brooks and Durrance, but now I see that some of Allen's men were always in attendance to overhear any remarks.

"Allen even went so far as to leave one of his own men to die in the blaze at Durrance's home. That would have diverted all blame from him. I rescued the man, but unfortunately he was unable to talk at the moment and he was murdered before he could expose Allen. And so—good night, gentlemen."

THE BAT slowly backed away as he spoke. He reached the floor length curtains that draped the farther window. Every eye was upon him. Allen watched the other three craftily. There were two other sides to this room through which an escape might be made.

Suddenly he came out of the chair and bolted straight toward the west wall. As he neared it, the window drapes there parted and the form of the Bat appeared. Allen gave a shriek of frustration, whirled and sped toward the opposite window. There again, the drapes parted and the Bat appeared, gun leveled. Allen reeled back, gibbering, raging and shaken badly. McGrath started for him Allen gave a wild yell and charged straight toward the end window through which he had seen the Bat vanish after the exposure. Ten feet from it, Allen slowed up. His knees buckled and he sank to the floor, a beaten, cowering man.

For the Bat stood there, a grim figure of doom. McGrath was wetting his lips and trying to stare in three directions until his head swam. How had the Bat been in three places at once? This got even the good lieutenant.

McGrath clapped handcuffs on Allen's unresisting wrists. Then he growled an oath.

"I'm going to satisfy myself. I think a certain party is the Bat. We'll see!"

He headed for the hall and the phone. Warner checked him, led him aside and whispered.

"Listen, you fool, if it's Quinn you think is the Bat, think again. I happened to be at his house when you phoned earlier. I thought, as you did that he was the Bat and I went there to see if he was wounded and needed help. He wasn't. He is totally blind. No one can cure him—ever."

"But we're not sure," McGrath protested.

Warner piloted McGrath to the door, led him onto the porch and pointed. There was a taxi parked at the curb, and a street lamp just beyond showed Tony Quinn seated impassively in the tonneau.

"I brought him with me," Warner said. "Naturally I didn't ask him inside because I figured some fur might fly. If that doesn't satisfy you, speak to the taxi driver. He's an innocent bystander. If Quinn didn't leave the cab, then he can't be the Bat, can he?"

McGrath stalked out to the cab, opened the door and looked in at Tony Quinn. Then he turned to the driver.

"You, did your passenger get out of this cab for even a minute?"

The driver turned a puzzled face toward McGrath. "Him? No, sir, We been chewing the fat here. Somethin' wrong?"

"Why, Lieutenant McGrath," Quinn spoke up. "What's happened? Did you get the man you were after? Here, help me out a moment. I want to know what's going on."

Quinn stepped out of the taxi, seemed to lose his balance and almost fell. McGrath grabbed him, but somehow one of Quinn's hands knocked McGrath's hat off. McGrath sighed dismally, bent down to pick it up and saw Quinn's foot squash it into a battered mass.

The taxi driver jumped out of the car with amazing speed for his huge bulk. He picked up the hat, dusted it off and then stepped behind McGrath. He put the hat on his head, tilted it at the proper angle and stepped back.

"Looks okay, Chief. Wasn't hurt none. You'll have to excuse my fare. He's a blind man."

"Thanks," McGrath declared coldly. "And good night!"

HALF an hour later, Quinn was led into his own house by Warner. Silk met them at the door. Quinn shook hands with the Commissioner and then, as the door closed, he met his valet's eye and both men shook in silent laughter.

"You put it over splendidly, Silk. I never saw McGrath so confused in all my life, and we scared the daylights out of Allen. Butch certainly took the part off well. He's getting rid of the taxi now. Three Black Bats! Can you imagine?"

A girl's voice spoke from the privacy of the library, "One of them is enough for me, Tony Quinn. I ought to be angry—sitting here worrying over whether you'd get away with it."

Tony Quinn forgot that he was a blind man, forgot that his face was hideously scarred, forgot that a vast spy organization had been shattered into bits. Silk withdrew to the kitchen and started preparing a snack.

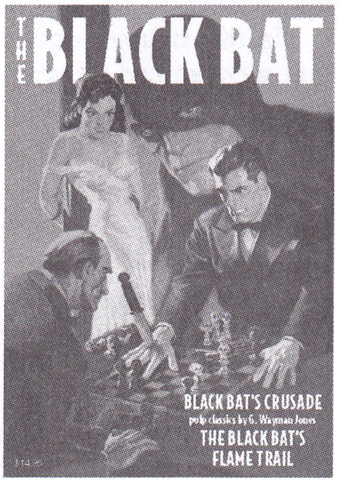
Later, in his own section of the city, Lieutenant McGrath entered his home for the second time that night. He threw his hat on a table, faced a mirror and started to smooth down what was left of his hair. His jaw fell ludicrously as he stared at his own reflection. There was an image of a Bat pasted on his forehead!

He walked over to the table, picked up the hat and suddenly hurled it on the floor. Then he jumped up and down on it.

THE END

On sale soon in THE BLACK BAT #4:

The Nemesis of Crime returns in classic pulp novels by Norman A. Daniels and the *Spider*'s Norvell Page. First, voodoo drums sound in cities across the nation as mysterious murders fueled by ancient magic take a terrifying toll in *The Black Bat's Crusade*. Then, *The Black Bat's Flame Trail* leads to a sinister arsonist who wields a torch of terror as New York tenements burn. *Bonus:* The Mask returns in another Golden Age illustrated adventure by Kin Platt!



THE BELFRY by Will Murray

The Black Bat tackles enemy agents in this exciting volume culled from the early years of his career.

No doubt the editors of *Black Book Detective* magazine conceived their new hero as a metropolitan crimefighter. Criminals of all stripes were his prey. But history intervened. In September of 1939, Europe erupted into a new world war when Germany rolled into Poland, plunging the continent into a ferocious struggle.

For supposedly neutral America, the immediate issue was whether or not the United States and its incredible industrial might would be drawn into the spreading conflict. Germans of American extraction were against it, and the German-American bunds—which were Nazi-funded secret subversive organizations—were a growing phenomenon.

Propitiously, author Norman A. Daniels had turned in his third Black Bat novel in July of that year. When the time came to plot the fifth installment of the new series, Daniels or his editors decided to take the Black Bat in a new direction.

Out of the story conference emerged *The Black Bat's Spy Trail*, which was written in November, 1939 and published in the March, 1940 issue of *Black Book Detective*. Here, the foreign agents are carefully described without being named as operatives of Nazi Germany. Since America was not yet embroiled in World War II, this was a gesture to public sensibilities, including the vocal German- American societies who were sensitive to being maligned as subversives, just as the Italian-American readers resisted portrayals of the Mafia in pulp magazine stories. Both groups were prone to penning letters of complaint to editors who published stories that offended them.

Even though he specialized in crime-suspense thrillers, Daniels was a natural for this type of story. Back in 1935, he had created a spy hunter called The Eagle for Magazine Publishers' *Spy Stories*. This character appeared only once, in the novelette, "The Eagle Strikes." Under the name "Kerry McRoberts," Daniels produced an updated version of The Eagle for *Thrilling Spy Stories*, dated Fall 1939—in perfect timing with global developments. The Eagle, really U.S. Intelligence operative Jeff Shannon, battled spies and saboteurs who threatened the United States during this short-lived series.

For whatever reasons, the Black Bat series lent itself to stories of counterespionage. Fed by concerns of an active Fifth Column operating clandestinely in America, readers responded positively to *The Black Bat's Spy Trail*. In short order, Daniels began turning out *The Black Bat and the Trojan Horse* and *The Black Bat and the Red Menace*—a process that intensified after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and the apprehension of the notorious Duquesne Spy Ring in 1941.

By the time the U.S. had become embroiled in World War II, all pretenses of neutrality were removed and Norman Daniels produced in rapid succession, *The Seventh Column* and *The Nazi Spy Murders*. The Black Bat had joined the war—even if he fought exclusively on the home front.

For his twentieth exploit, Daniels pitted fighting former D. A. Tony Quinn against Nazi saboteurs in *Captains of Death*. This is our second selection, and it, too, was torn from blazing headlines.

Submitted in August 1942 under the title, "Captain of Murder," *Captains of Death* was published in the May 1943 *Black Book Detective*. This tale of wartime intrigue in which a fugitive Nazi agent goes to practicing attorney Tony Quinn, seeking refuge and offering to betray his still-at-large comrades, can be easily traced to one of the most explosive stories of 1942.

Operation Pastorius was the daring German espionage mission in which four German saboteurs, all of whom had formerly lived in the United States, were secretly landed by U-boat at Amagansett, New York, on Long Island just after midnight, June 13th, 1942.

The group immediately buried their German Navy uniforms and explosive devices, donned civilian clothes and prepared to melt into Manhattan's teaming canyons to prepare to initiate a wave of explosive industrial sabotage calculated to disrupt U.S. war production and undermine America's will to fight.

Unfortunately for them, an unarmed Coast Guardsman happened upon the group which, caught off-guard, claimed to be stranded fishermen. Refusing Coast Guard shelter, the nervous quartet offered Seaman John Cullen a handsome cash bribe. Taking the money to ally their fears, Cullen reported the encounter. But by the time a patrol boat arrived, all the Coast Guard found were the buried uniforms and suspicious material, which the group had planned to recover later. The U-202 was spotted escaping in the fog, proving the encounter had been serious. The F.B.I. was notified, but no trace of the quartet could be found.

Three days later, a second team of four German saboteurs landed near Jacksonville, Florida. The plan called for the two groups to rendezvous in a Cincinnati hotel on July 4th, ironically enough, to plan and coordinate operations which would focus on destroying the hydroelectric plants at Niagara Falls, the New York water system, key aluminum and magnesium plants, as well as critical rail lines and waterways in the eastern U.S.

A reign of terror and sabotage as vicious and

violent as anything printed in a pulp magazine was about to begin. But it never came to pass.

After the near-capture during the Long Island landing, saboteur George John Dasch, fearful that the operation was compromised, colluded with fellow agent Ernest Burger, one of the two American citizens in the group, about what to do.

The two had been mistreated under the

Nazi regime and decided to betray their fellow saboteurs. Dasch called the F.B.I. in New York, but was considered a crackpot. So he took a train to Washington, D.C. and went to F.B.I. headquarters, where agents initially refused to believe his wild story. Only after Dasch dumped $84,000 American money, carried from Germany to fund the operation, onto the desk of Assistant Director D. M. Ladd did a serious interrogation commence.

Over a two-week period, the F.B.I. quietly arrested the unsuspecting German agents before they could commit a single act of sabotage. They were tried before a special military tribunal commencing on July 8th, 1942. When the trial concluded on August 1st, all eight were found guilty and sentenced to death. The two betrayers had their sentences reduced to long prison terms. In 1948, President Harry S. Truman granted both men executive clemency, and they were deported to the American Zone of Occupied Germany, where they were not well received, given that they were seen as traitors.

It's obvious that the sensational story was the direct inspiration for Daniels' exciting novel, right down to the betraying agent. This tribunal—the first such military tribunal convened since the assassination of Abraham Lincoln—was in the headlines when Norman Daniels was writing *Captains of Death.*

Operation Pastorius proved to be such a debacle that no subsequent sabotage team was sent to the United States for the duration of the war.

With all this thrilling wartime history in mind, enjoy the Black Bat's battle against the *Captains of Death*, starting on the next page. •

THE MAN BEHIND THE BLACK BAT

Norman A. Daniels (1905-95) worked as an insurance investigator after studying at Columbia and Northwestern universities. Born Norman Arthur Danberg in Brooklyn, Connecticut, Daniels made his first professional sale to *Gangster Stories* in 1931, receiving $29.75 for "Vapors of Vengeance."

Daniels' breakout year was 1934, when his output jumped to 400,000 words, including fifteen stories for Harry Donenfeld's *Spicy* pulps. During the following decades, the versatile wordsmith produced tales in a wide variety of genres, including science fiction, horror, detective, adventure, sports and love, selling stories to such diverse publications as *G-Men*, *Thrilling Spy Stories*, *Strange Stories*, *Air War, Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* and even John W. Campbell's *Unknown.*

Working under the "G. Wayman Jones" house name, Daniels created the Black Bat for Standard editor Leo Margulies, and eventually wrote 55 of the 62 Black Bat pulp novels. "Leo asked me to think of something to compete with The Shadow," Daniels explained. "I came up with this character I called the Tiger because in the initial episode, the hero had been doused with acid. His face was lined like a tiger's. He wanted to change the Tiger to the Black Bat because he wanted it to go into *Black Book Detective* magazine."

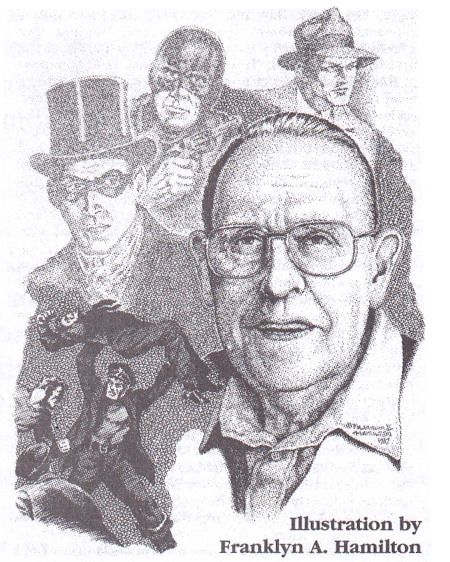


Illustration by Franklyn A. Hamilton

One of the most prolific writers for the hero pulps, Daniels pounded out dozens of *Phantom Detective* novels, 23 Jerry Wade stories and 15 Crimson Mask novelettes for *Detective Novels*, along with 23 Skipper shorts for *Doc Savage Magazine.*

From 1940-43, Daniels averaged a million words annually, an output only surpassed by *The Shadow*'s Walter B. Gibson. Daniels was assisted by his wife Dorothy, who regularly edited and retyped his manuscripts before launching her own writing career.

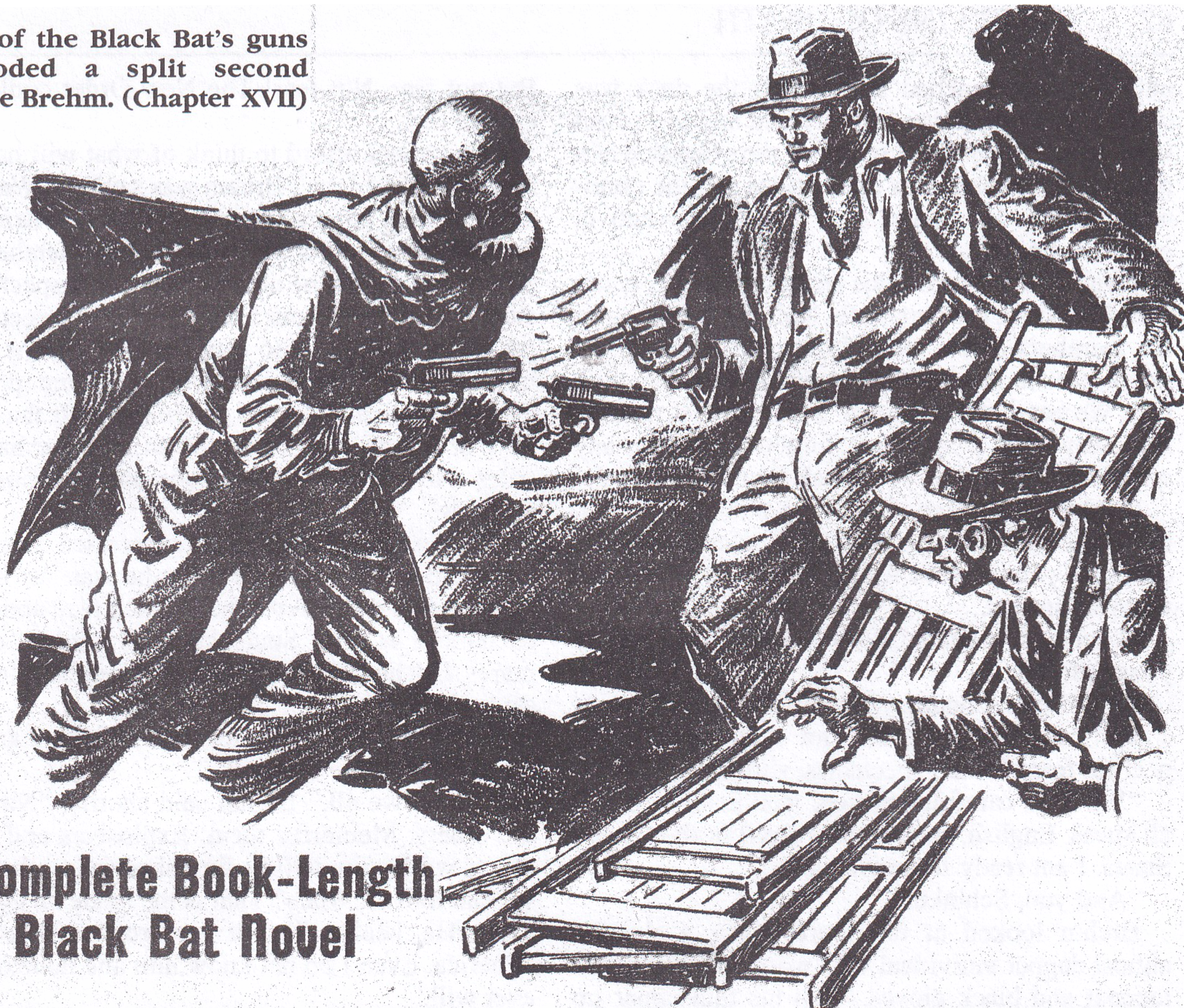
During 1940 alone, Norman Daniels wrote five Black Bat novels, eight Candid Camera Kid tales, four Masked Detective novels, four Crimson Mask novelettes, three Dan Fowler novels and single adventures of The Skipper and The Eagle, in addition to a variety of non-series stories.

Between 1949 and 1954, Daniels scripted 67 half-hour adventures for the *Nick Carter, Master Detective* radio series.

During the Golden Age of Television, Daniels wrote teleplays for a number of popular television series including *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Colt .45*, *Zane Grey Theater*, *The Chevron Hall of Stars*, *Sugarfoot*, *The Web*, *The Restless Gun* and *The Ford Television Theatre.*

—Anthony Tollin •

One of the Black Bat's guns exploded a split second before Brehm. (Chapter XVII)



A Complete Book-Length Black Bat Novel

CAPTAINS OF DEATH

By G. WAYMAN JONES

When the Diabolical Dr. Mars and a Sinister Crew of Saboteurs Stalk, Tony Quinn and His Aides Go All Out to Exterminate the Nazi Rats Who Plot Destruction!

CHAPTER I
Killers from Abroad

TO ANYONE on that lonely beach, it would have seemed just a reef out there in the darkness. But reefs do not move and this did, though slowly. It grew larger until it assumed the shape and proportions of a submarine.

Its conning tower opened and a man with night glasses emerged. He studied the beach intently then crawled out on deck. An officer followed, then five men in civilian clothes.

Sailors emerged too carrying a deflated rubber boat and a tank of gas. The gas hissed, the boat snapped into shape, and was carefully lowered over-side.

One of the men in civilian clothes stood at rigid attention. He gave the salute that must already be popular in Hades, shook hands like an automaton, then lowered himself into the rubber boat.

The other four repeated those gestures, and the boat shoved off. The submarine remained surfaced

until the boat reached shore, then the deck was cleared, conning tower hatch closed and the vessel submerged. Ashore, the five men were huddled in a group. Fritz Brehm was their leader and the dominating force. He spoke in a low voice—and in excellent English.

"Well, we are here. This section of beach is not patrolled so we are quite safe. Now remember—we are members of the New Order. Let nothing you see or hear in this backward country interfere with that. We have come to carry the war to Americans in a way they shall never forget. Are there any questions? Daimler—you speak first."

Gebhart Daimler was a broad-shouldered, broad-faced man who looked like a stevedore. By daylight, yellow teeth would have been displayed when he smiled.

"I am quite prepared, *Herr Kapitan*. I await only your orders."

Fritz Brehm nodded. "What about you, Gauss?"

Wolfram Gauss, short and with beady eyes peering from behind spectacles, shrugged.

"We were carefully chosen, well instructed. We all speak English, for we once lived in the United States. I am ready for anything."

"And you, Schinkel?"

Brehm looked at the fourth man, a slender, almost dapper individual who wore a derby, a dark topcoat and black gloves. With his thin upper lip adorned by a mustache, Eugen Schinkel looked something like the suave villain in a play. He laughed softly.

"I have wondered, *Herr Kapitan*—where are our explosives? How do we manage to create havoc without dynamite?"

BREHM promptly led them toward a small shanty. He drew a gun, approached carefully, but a quick examination showed it had not been used in months. He motioned the others to enter and closed the squeaky door.

"Schinkel brings up an important question," he said. "I am glad that none of you asked too much on the voyage over. As I am in command, all orders were given to me. Now I shall make them known to you. I... Freytag, you seem to shrink into the background. Are you afraid?"

"No, No, *Herr Kapitan.*"

Karl Freytag was the youngest of the group, and he spoke confidently, for he would not admit that he was remembering what had happened to the others who had made two landings here—or that they had been electrocuted.

Freytag was about twenty-seven, hard-muscled, athletically lean, but his face was seared deeply in lines of hatred for all things except those praised by the New Order. He had forgotten what a smile was. But not fear. Not fear! The New Order could not change that.

"We cannot afford to think of what will happen if we are picked up," Brehm was saying. "We have the necessary papers in various American names—drivers' licenses, draft cards, union membership books. We should be able to pass any inspection if stopped—if we use our heads. We must forget what happened to those who came before us. The electric chair is a barbarian way of killing people. These Americans do not do things with the neatness of Germans—the lop of an axe, the bark of rifles. No—they are barbarians and we must not forget it."

With an effort, Karl Freytag suppressed a shudder. He had been only sixteen when he was last in this country, and even then, when he had read about the executions at Sing Sing, they had brought nightmares. But he gave no idea of his thoughts. He only said:

"I am prepared to die for the Fatherland and for our *Fuehrer, Herr Kapitan.*"

"So are we all," Brehm said shortly. "Now for the orders. Memorize them. Explosives and other things we require will be furnished to us by—shall we call him Dr. Mars? That is the name he goes by here. He heads all our undercover forces in America. Even I do not know him and none of you ever will."

"But, *Herr Kapitan,*" Daimler protested, "how can we work with him if we are not permitted to see him?"

"Through his subordinates and through me, dummox," Brehm snapped. "We leave here at once and split up. We all head for New York and proceed directly to addresses I shall give you. Face everyone boldly, and do not fear. The Americans can suspect nothing of what we plan.

"Once at your designated places, you will remain there for twenty-four hours, then begin making certain contacts which I shall describe. Daimler, you will be first; Gauss second; Schinkel third and you, Freytag, fourth. In that order, a day apart, you will make your contacts, receive instructions and carry them out."

"Are we permitted to know anything about what we are to do, *Herr Kapitan?*" Schinkel asked.

"I can tell you this," Brehm answered. "The destruction of property essential to the war efforts of this stupid nation is involved—and accomplished so that as many men and women will die as possible. Americans must be taught a lesson they will never forget. Now—here are your last orders. Listen carefully."

FRITZ BREHM gave detailed instructions and made each man repeat his portion of the program

three times. When he was satisfied, they left the shanty one by one and disappeared into the night.

Karl Freytag was the second to leave. He hurried across the beach, found a road, and glanced at a map he carried in his pocket. It placed his whereabouts so, since he knew the region well, he flung the map away and started walking fast.

After an hour, he reached a highway and the end of a bus route. He was well provided with United States money and boarded a bus. Before it started, he bought a newspaper from a small store.

He settled back in the bus, cursing the weak lights, not knowing they had been dimmed for the duration. He read about the war and frowned. Nothing like this was reported in Germany. Clever propaganda, though, and he found himself half believing it.

American bombers over Germany. The gradual forcing back of the Japs in the South Seas. Anger rising higher and higher against the Axis in South America. Funny little stories about Mussolini. These made Karl Freytag chuckle. He had no respect for that junior ape.

Turning the pages, he saw the faces of two men. Under the picture was a caption.

SLAYERS PAY SUPREME PENALTY!

Freytag held the paper close to his nose, read every word of the article, then read it again. It concerned an execution at Sing Sing the night before. Two murderers had walked the last mile and the reporter had gone into detail. The last meal, the slitting of the trouser leg, the shave to expose the skull, the slippered feet. The last mile, green door, witnesses—and the gruesome chair resting on its rubber mat. The electrodes, salt water-soaked sponge.

Karl Freytag licked his lips and flung the newspaper to the floor and tried to forget the electric chair. Yet he could almost see those six spies who had died in it. He had known two of the men well. They had attended the same saboteur's school that he had.

The dimmed-out landscape could make him forget. He picked up the newspaper again, and studied another picture. It was that of a man who had undoubtedly been handsome at one time. Something seemed to have happened to his face. The eyes were strange and had deep hollows around them. Idly, Freytag read the accompanying story.

> Blind Attorney Anthony Quinn, former district attorney, was last of night elected vice president of the Bar Association. Mr. Quinn residses at 5104 Avalon Street and maintains his law offices in the Carmody Building. In making the nomination, Bar Association President Arnold told the meeting that no fairer or more honest man than Quinn had ever been connected with the Bar.

Freytag pursed his lips and that slick little mind of his started to work furiously. In that mind were visions of the electric chair. Never in his life had Karl Freytag been so afraid of anything. If he should ever be sentenced to burn, he would go stark, raving mad.

"AFTER all," he muttered under his breath, "I could get along here with my forged papers. No one need know who I am nor what my purpose is here. I have money. I can get more. Coming here was not my idea. I was chosen only because I'd lived in the United States and knew the language and the customs. I was not consulted. No! Just orders, and I am sent away. Orders! I am sick of them. Sick of the war—of everything."

He left the bus uptown, transferred to a subway and rode about a hundred blocks. Then he took a crosstown trolley, and after proceeding almost all the way across town, he alighted and began walking.

Karl Freytag was in a hurry now. In great haste to bargain for his life at the expense of four others. Freytag was a rat. A particularly sly rat, for what was in his mind meant comfort and ease for him. Safety, too—never that ghastly electric chair.

Almost at the end of a street, by peering closely, he saw a wooden sign attached to a neat, white fence. It read "Anthony Quinn."

Karl Freytag set his jaw and opened the gate. Proceeding up the path, he saw that Quinn's house was large, indicating wealth. That was excellent.

Lights gleamed faintly through curtained windows, but other than that, there were no signs of life.

CHAPTER II
Farewell Party

TONY QUINN'S home was large and indicative of his wealth. The rooms were spacious and well-furnished, much better furnished than the ordinary visitor who never was permitted to see all of it could guess. For when the front gate opened, a signal was flashed inside the house. When anyone went up the porch steps, front or rear, another signal warned those inside. The front doorbell was rigged to announce the arrival of a visitor by ringing a buzzer in the kitchen—and by certain lights in a laboratory that was the secret of those who lived in the house.

Only four people knew of the existence of that laboratory and entrance to it was gained in two ways. From a garden house at the rear of the estate a tunnel led beneath the mansion and terminated in

the lab. The other entrance was through a secret door set in the wall of the study.

The laboratory on this night had taken on a festive appearance. Chemical apparatus had been pushed back. Greenough microscopes, spectroscopes cameras, ultraviolet ray machines were all covered and tucked into cupboards.

The main laboratory bench had been pulled out from the wall and was covered with a red, white and blue table cloth On this improvised table were wines, Scotch, soda, cigars and cigarettes, besides food piled high.

Four people were seated around it. One was Tony Quinn, in tweeds. He was the man whose picture Freytag had seen in the newspaper, the Tony Quinn who was believed to be blind. There was nothing blind about his eyes now. They were clear, mirth-filled.

Beside Quinn sat Carol Baldwin, pretty, blonde and smiling. "Silk" Kirby, attired as a servant, raised his wine glass. Silk was a nickname, and rightfully so. At one time, Silk had been a slick confidence man, able to talk blood out of a stone. He was as smooth as his nickname.

"Here's to Butch." Silk held the glass high. Quinn and Carol promptly arose. "A little dumb, maybe, but with the strength of a great oak. To Butch as he leaves us to become a member of the armed forces of the United States. To Butch—and Heaven help the Krauts when he gets at them with his lovely proficiency in cracking heads together."

Butch, huge, with paws that almost hid the wine glass, turned a bright scarlet. He cleared his throat and spoke hoarsely.

"Ladies and gents, I want to ... aw, heck, anybody'd think I was making a speech. Getting a medal or something. All I want to say is thanks. I never expected a going away party like this—or them presents. Gosh, they're swell. The watch Silk gave me. I... hey, Silk, did you cop it from a guy who won't file a complaint?"

"I copped it from a jewelry store and paid for it in folding money," Silk said resentfully.

"Okay," Butch grinned. "And this wallet from Carol. Say—it's swell. And from the boss—I mean Mr. Quinn—enough dough so I can take the boys in a couple of hundred crap games. Boy, I'll be a millionaire! Thanks again, and I promise I'll bust the skull of every Kraut or every yellow... well, Carol's here so I can't say it. You know what I mean, though. Thanks."

BUTCH sat down, drained his glass and reached for food. It was marvelous to watch him stow it away. Tony Quinn laughed.

"Don't forget to wake up in time for your medical exam tomorrow, Butch. The doctor will probably take one look at you and put you in the tank division with a suit of armor. We're sorry to lose you. For a long time all of us have been waging a rather private war against crooks and killers. We've outpointed them, outfought them. Now we have another battle, one so great that all of us must take part. I—can't go.

"For once, I am sorry that I ever practiced the deception of being blind. Now I can't admit it has all been a bluff because my good friend Captain McGrath of the police would promptly fling me into a cell, and wars can't be fought from jail cells. Silk is overage. Carol has mentioned something about joining the WAACs. I hope I've convinced her that she is much more necessary to me."

"I'm quite convinced, darling." Carol laid a hand on Quinn's arm. "There are so many things we can do. Things the police and even the F.B.I. cannot handle. The Black Bat and his little group will fight on the home front."

Suddenly Silk humped up and headed toward the secret door.

"Front gate just opened," he said. "Look—the purple bulb is lit. Someone on the porch, and there goes the doorbell. I'll see who it is."

Quinn got up hurriedly, too, seized a cane which was leaning in a corner. He smiled at Carol, saluted Butch, and then a strange thing happened. His bright, alert eyes suddenly became filmed and dull. They stared straight ahead, unwinkingly, like those of a totally blind man. With his cane he tapped his way to the secret door. It closed behind him.

"Doggone," Butch said, "I'll bet it's Captain McGrath. That guy is always busting things up. I ought to take a poke at him before I put on my uniform, Carol."

Carol smiled. "I wouldn't, Butch. Not if you want to fight Hitler and Tojo. McGrath would lock you up and he might look for a motive, too—for your attack. If he ever finds it, you, Silk, Tony and I will all be in the clink. Now go ahead and eat."

Tony Quinn made his way to a chair in the study. It faced the fireplace where a few embers still glowed. He put the cane between his legs, picked up a pipe and filled it with tobacco. He was applying flame when Silk came in.

"A gentleman who won't give his name, sir. Says he must see you at once and alone," Silk lowered his voice. "Looks like a screwball to me."

"Show him in," Quinn said. "After all, I am an attorney and people need lawyers when they are in trouble."

Silk left the room and returned with Karl Freytag, setting a chair for the visitor close by Tony Quinn. Freytag gave Silk a half sneering, half challenging look and gestured for him to get out of the room. As Silk walked softly away, for some

reason he couldn't explain, he had never before in his life felt more like pushing in a man's face.

"I am Tony Quinn," the apparently blind man said to Freytag. "You wished to see me?"

FREYTAG started passing one hand half an inch from Quinn's eyes. This drew not the slightest reaction. Freytag settled back in his chair, satisfied.

"You were trying to see whether or not I was really blind, weren't you?" Quinn smiled crookedly. "I felt the breeze from your hand. Believe me, I am blind. Now what is your business?"

"You are clever," Freytag said, "But you are blind and a man who cannot see is helpless, yes? So I will tell you. My name is Karl Freytag. I have been in this country less than four hours and I disembarked from a German submarine. What do you think of that?"

Quinn's expression never altered. "I think you need a psychiatrist more than an attorney, Mr. Freytag. Suppose what you have said is the truth. Why admit it to me? Why did you come here?"

"So you do not believe," Freytag growled. "Naturally, it is strange, but I can prove it. Put your hand on this gun. It is the latest model Luger. There—do you recognize the shape of the gun? Now this—an iron cross. I won it with a Panzer Division when we invaded Poland. I machine-gunned soldiers who were hiding in a house. Several women and children died, too, but that was not my fault and, anyway, a few less of such as they were make the world a better place to live in."

Quinn twisted around in his chair. "Freytag," he said bluntly, "if I was not blind, I would smash you into a pulp and enjoy it. Get out of here!"

"No, wait!" Freytag laughed harshly. "Hear me out first. I did not come alone. Four others are here, too—somewhere in New York. We are all graduates of the *Ruckwanderer*, the Nazi school for training saboteurs. We have been sent to replace those eight men who were recently captured."

"Then prepare yourself for a shock," Quinn snapped. "It will come from the same electric chair that removed six of your compatriots."

Quinn's eyes were blank and dead looking, but he could see, and never had he observed words to have so forceful an effect upon a man. Freytag turned green and began to tremble. He licked his lips and cursed violently in German.

"No! That is not for me. That is why I came here, to save myself from electrocution. I am afraid of it. Not to die. We have been trained to do that. But that ghastly chair! No—not for me. I am going to help round up those men who came with me. You must assist me."

"Just a moment," Quinn said. "You speak English without an accent. Is this some kind of a hoax?"

Freytag's lips drew back in a snarl. "You will not think so when those men begin to work. They are going to blast airplane factories, ships, bridges, department stores. For months we all studied methods of doing this. Your police or F.B.I. cannot stop it—unless you listen to me and help."

Quinn tamped down his pipe and fumbled on the table for a match. He struck one, held it to the bowl and puffed slowly.

"Let me get this straight," he said. "You are a member of a band of saboteurs. You came here by submarine four hours ago. Your orders are to create confusion and terror. Yet you promptly come to me, a stranger, and want to confess. It's incredible."

"But true," Freytag said, "If you could see, I'd show you certain documents. You must believe me. I need your help and you need mine."

"Why don't you go to the F.B.I.?"

"And be locked up promptly? Oh, no. I have been locked up, in a land which is a prison from one border to the other. I have had enough and, besides, the moment I turned traitor, the Gestapo would seek me out. Even the electric chair might be preferable to what they'd do."

QUINN did believe Freytag. The man's impossible story was true. There was too much sincerity in his voice, too much fear.

"What is your proposition?" he asked. "Even if I do help you, the Gestapo will be sure to find you here."

"No. Not the way I have it planned. I shall live here, as your guest. From time to time I will tell you where to have one of the saboteurs picked up before he can do any damage. You see, each man reports to an individual cell of our organization, to take over the sabotage. In order that no suspicion will be raised, they contact these cells a day apart. That means you have plenty of time."

"You mean to hide here?" Quinn explained. "Give me this information which I can turn over to F.B.I. agents anonymously? What happens after these saboteurs are all cleaned up?"

"I don't know. But I will not go to prison, do you hear me? I shall make my own way. Come—do you agree to my proposition? I cannot afford to wait, and neither can you. Unless you prefer to see one of the big department stores blown up when it is filled with people during a rush hour?"

"It is agreed," Quinn said quietly. "When do you begin talking?"

Freyteg gave a sigh of relief. He helped himself to cigarettes on the table, and seemed to be thinking.

"First, there is Gebhart Daimler," he explained. "He makes contact tonight. How? I shall tell after I am fed. I want food. Butter, white bread. Meat—wine and whiskey. I want the best of everything.

Then I shall pick out a room. Oh, yes—this servant. Fire him."

"No," Quinn answered quickly. "I won't agree to that. He is my eyes. I'm dependent upon him. But I promise you he will know nothing of our arrangements. He will serve you as he does me."

Quinn called Silk. He came at once, bald head glistening as if from perspiration although the house was not overheated. Silk had heard every word.

"Silk," Quinn said, "Mr. Freytag is going to stay with us for a while. No one must know of his presence. You will obey his orders as you do mine."

"Yes, sir." Silk bowed slightly. He looked at Freytag. "I shall be most happy to be of service, sir."

"Then why are you standing there?" Freytag snapped. "I want food—quickly. Go get it."

"At once, sir," Silk bowed again.

"Do you mind eating alone?" Quinn asked, "I want to sit here and think. What you have told me is a shock. I have to figure ways of getting rid of those spies and saving your skin at the same time. It won't be easy."

"Perhaps not." Freytag calmly dropped his cigarette on the expensive rug and ground it out with his heel. "But worth all the trouble, eh, Mr. Quinn? After I am fed, I shall tell you about Gebhart Daimler. He is a dangerous man."

Silk escorted Freytag to the kitchen. While Silk entered the study and as he left it, Quinn's cane was tapping the bare floor nervously. It sounded like an outlet for the nerves of a blind man. In reality, the cane tapped a message to Silk. He was to keep Freytag in the kitchen for fifteen minutes at least.

At the door, Silk stopped and turned around.

"I quite understand, sir. Mr. Freytag is to be our guest and receive every courtesy."

CHAPTER III
Contact

QUINN tucked his cane under one arm and sped to the secret door. As he entered the lab, Carol and Butch looked up, startled at the change in him.

"I must talk fast," Quinn said. "My visitor claims to be a Nazi saboteur just landed from a German sub. Four others came with him and are hiding in New York. Freytag—my visitor—wants to expose them because he's terrified by the thought of being put to death in the electric chair. I never saw a man so thoroughly frightened."

"And me joining the Army!" Butch groaned. "Just when something like this breaks. Boss, can't you do something?"

"No, I'm afraid not. You enlisted. Though Heaven knows, we could use you. Finish the party. Carol, you stand by for trouble. I don't know just how I'll handle this, but it's a job for the Black Bat."

"Tony," Carol said apprehensively, "this can't be a trick?"

"I'm sure it isn't. Freytag is the genuine article all right. Has an iron cross and a Luger—a new type the Nazis are manufacturing. None could possibly enter this country unless a spy brought it. No, we've had the war brought right to our doorstep and here I'll fight it. Good luck, Butch—in case I don't see you again."

They shook hands and Quinn winced slightly at the pressure of that big man's grip. Butch never had realized his tremendous strength. Then Quinn hurried back to the study and was in his chair, as before, when Freytag walked in and slouched down in a chair.

"Good food," he said. "Tomorrow, I wish steaks. Thick, juicy ones. And cognac. I grew accustomed to cognac when we were in Paris. It was free there—to Germans." He laughed. "I would have liked to see one of those stupid Frenchmen try to stop us from taking it."

"Look here," Quinn said, "I'm not interested in your past nor even your future. I have kept my part of the bargain. Now where can this man Gebhart Daimler be found? And how about the others?"

"Daimler tonight," Freytag smiled knowingly. "The others later, depending on how you treat me. Daimler used to work in a slaughter house and there is nothing he would rather do than kill. He loves blood. Why, in Czechoslovakia, I saw him brain an old man with the butt of his gun, just as he used to kill cattle. An expert job. The old man never uttered a sound."

Freytag looked at Quinn and laughed. "My stories frighten you. Of course, that is method. Frightened people cannot fight well. Oh, yes—Daimler. Before morning, he contacts a section of our sabotage and espionage system here. Tell the F.B.I. men to watch the bookstore of one Herman Grossfetter. He will ask for Dickens' 'Oliver Twist.' He will turn to page one hundred and twenty, underline the last two words, then the first two words on page two hundred and ten. Grossfetter will then know Daimler is all right."

Quinn's cane was tapping again. Silk, in the hallway, deciphered the message and grinned. He hurried upstairs, found a small bottle in a medicine cabinet, and took it to the kitchen. He poured some of the contents into the bottom of a brandy inhaler, dumped brandy into it and more in a second glass. He placed these on a tray and carried them to the study.

"I beg your pardon," he said smoothly, "Mr. Freytag was rather put out that we had no cognac. I remembered a bottle of brandy in the cellar and fetched it."

SILK maneuvered the tray so that Freytag got the drugged glass. Quinn took the other. Freytag swallowed his portion in a gulp, and expanded a bit.

"Very good," he approved. "I shall have more of that later perhaps. Now I shall pick out a room. And clothing. Quality materials, do you understand?"

"In the morning, I shall take your measurements." Silk bowed and wished measurements were for a casket. "Everything will be taken care of. If you wish to go to your room now—"

"Yes." Freytag yawned and stretched. "It was a difficult voyage. I am tired. Well? Why do you stand there? Show me the room."

When Silk came back downstairs about twenty minutes later, Quinn was no longer in the study. Silk hurried into the hidden laboratory and found Quinn attired in black clothing from head to foot. On a table lay the hood and cape of the Black Bat. Quinn was stuffing two automatics into pockets that were really holsters.

Many people would have given much to see Tony Quinn like this. Most of them were crooks he had fought in investigating crime behind the mask of the Black Bat. But there was also Captain McGrath of the Police who had sworn someday to arrest the Black Bat and expose him. He suspected that Tony Quinn was not blind, but suspicions do not make convictions, and McGrath had to be sure.

It had all come about when Tony Quinn had been the district attorney. Crooks on trial had flung acid at certain documentary evidence Quinn was introducing against them. Some of the acid had struck Quinn's face, instantly—and it was believed, permanently—blinding him.

For months he remained this way, resigning to a life of darkness. He was wealthy, but money could not buy back his sight. Specialists all over the world had examined him and shaken their heads.

Silk Kirby had put in an appearance just before Quinn was blinded. Desperate, Silk had come to rob and had remained to become a loyal friend, after Quinn had persuaded him of the error of his ways. Butch had entered the little band much later when he had displayed his prowess fighting on the side of the Black Bat.

But it was Carol who was responsible for the recovery of Tony Quinn's sight. She was the daughter of a police sergeant who had been wounded by gangsters and lay dying in the small Midwestern town where they had lived. She had come to Quinn with her father's offer of his eyes—the eyes of a dying man.

Quinn seized the offer, went to this small town and it was there that a little known surgeon performed a miracle. Carol's father died with the satisfaction of knowing his eyes would live on and help to continue the battle for law and order.

Then it was that the Black Bat came into being. Carol came to be one of his trusted aides—and as time progressed, their friendship turned to love. They displayed little of their true feelings for one another, though. There were more important things to do and both lived eternally under the shadow of death. The underworld had taken a blood oath to exterminate the Black Bat. That oath also went for his assistants.

TONY QUINN was remembering none of that now, however, as he looked at Silk Kirby.

"How is he?" he asked.

"Sleeping like a baby, sir. He'll stay put until late morning."

"I'm not sure yet that he isn't a faker," Quinn said, "but I can't take chances. If he is telling the truth, he must believe I merely turned the information over to the F.B.I. There must be no inkling that the Black Bat is implicated. For with Freytag living with us we must be careful."

"I know," Silk answered. "That rat would sell us out for a dime. Is there any way I can help, sir?"

"Change your clothes, Silk. We're going to pay a visit to a certain bookstore and get on the track of one saboteur and some sweet-scented spies. I don't care if they know the Black Bat is against them, but Freytag must never suspect."

"It's going to be dangerous with him around," Silk agreed. "But he holds all the cards. Just one thing, sir: if it develops that he is nothing but a liar, may I throw him out?"

"We'll both do it." Quinn smiled. "It would be a pleasure. Now change clothes, and hurry."

When Silk was ready they slipped through a trapdoor in the lab, entered a tunnel, and made their way to the garden house. Silk, emerging first, went to the quiet street behind the garden and made sure no one was prowling. At his signal, the Black Bat emerged. They hurried to a coupé parked at the curb.

It was a car that looked as if it had come from some auto graveyard. Yet under the battered hood was a motor that could tick as smoothly as an Airacobra's. Silk drove. The Black Bat had his hood and cape tucked beneath his coat, and a wide-brimmed hat was drawn down over his face.

These expeditions were highly dangerous because Tony Quinn was well known to almost every policeman in town and to plenty of civilians. Those scars, wrought by acid, were a dead give-away, also. If stopped, only one course was open—

THE BLACK BAT

hasty flight. They were always set for such an emergency.

White Street, they found, was a side street devoted mainly to used bookstores and small auction rooms. They drove past one bookstore bearing the simple title of "Herman's." That would be it. Silk stopped the car around the next corner.

Silk's appearance had changed radically. During his career as a confidence man, disguises sometimes had been necessary and Silk was pretty good at that. The two stock disguises he usually assumed were just about perfect. One was a pompous banker type and the other that of a tousle-haired yokel. Silk had selected the latter disguise this time with a few variations. He looked more like a wide-faced, straw-haired Teuton with piggish little eyes.

"I've been wondering," he said softly. "If we meet this Gebhart Daimler and he puts up an argument, should we take care of him permanently?"

"This is war," the Black Bat answered. "War means killing, and these men are trained to commit wholesale murder. They will give no mercy to their victims. They can expect none from us. Kill, if necessary, but remember these agents are only small cogs in a gigantic wheel and we've got to get the whole blasted mob. Drive around the block. I'll slip out near an alley behind Herman Grossfetter's store. You know what to do after that."

HOOD and cape adjusted, the Black Bat dropped off the slowly moving car and disappeared. Silk caught glimpse of a huge, eerie shadow on a wall in the alley. It looked like a bird in full flight, for the Black Bat's cape was ribbed to give the illusion of wings. Sometimes his strange costume paralyzed minor crooks with terror. The ribbed cape also made the Black Bat's physical build harder to identify.

As he moved along that dreary, pitch-dark alley, another weird phenomenon took place. During his months of blindness, his senses of touch and hearing had developed until they were extremely acute. This helped tremendously, but Nature repaid Tony Quinn for his suffering. When the bandages had been removed from his eyes after the miraculous operation, Tony Quinn had discovered that he could see as well in darkness as in light. Even faint pastel shades were visible to him.

Therefore, as the Black Bat, he was able to avoid pitfalls which would have snared an average man. There was, for instance, a barrel of rubbish in the middle of this dark alley that would not have been seen by ordinary eyes. But it was plain to the Black Bat's uncanny sight, so that he avoided it easily.

Silk, meanwhile, carrying out his instructions, had walked back toward the bookstore. It was after midnight, but the store was lighted and Silk decided

that Gebhart Daimler, the terrorist, had not yet appeared, or the bookstore would be darkened.

Silk opened the door and a bell jangled. An old man with watery eyes came from a back room and rubbed his hands as he approached.

"I wish to buy a book," Silk said. "I am a Dickens addict and seem somehow to have mislaid my copy of *Oliver Twist*. You have one, no doubt?"

"I will look," the old man said.

He walked down the aisle, studying the titles, then pulled a used book from the shelf.

"Ah yes, here it is. In good shape, too. Do you wish to examine it?"

Silk flipped the pages to one hundred and twenty, took a pencil from his pocket and drew a line beneath the last two words on the page. Then he turned to page two hundred and ten and did the same thing to the first two words. He laid the book down, waited.

Grossfetter's watery eyes peered into Silk's.

"You are Gebhart Daimler?" he finally queried.

"Do I look like *der Feuhrer?*" Silk barked. "I am here. Things must be started quickly. Move, you."

"Ja—ja, Herr Daimler. Just a minute while I lock the door and put out the lights. This is an auspicious moment, for Dr. Mars is here in person."

Silk felt like groaning. This Dr. Mars, whoever he was, didn't fit into the picture as Silk saw it. He wondered if he was biting off just a bit too much.

"Ah, good—take me to him," Silk said stoutly, and hoped the nervousness he felt wasn't outwardly displayed.

CHAPTER IV
The Doctor of Death

SILK followed the old man through a curtained doorway, between more rows of old books that smelled musty, then down a flight of narrow, illy lighted steps. More books were down here. A big case of them was pushed up against a cement wall. The old man grasped this case and gave it a tug. It swung back to reveal a narrow door.

Silk squeezed through it and found himself in what seemed to be a sub-cellar. The bookstore owner led the way to more steps, leading upward this time and finally tapped on a door. He spoke a word in German that Silk missed.

At least two keys were used to unlock the door, and two or three burglar chains dropped. Silk stepped into a well-furnished house and tried to figure out just where it was located in reference to the bookstore. He had taken so many corners, he didn't know.

Two burly men glowered at him until Grossfetter whispered the name, "Gebhart Daimler." Then they drew to attention and stood that way while Silk passed them.

He was brought to another room. Here were eleven men. Silk counted them quickly. They looked like businessmen, though a few may have been mechanics. Some were well-dressed, others more cheaply, but all had the unsmiling faces of Huns.

They crowded around him, speaking German. Silk stepped back and raised one hand.

"Idiots!" he snapped in English. "The orders are not to use the tongue of the Fatherland. One uses it too much, and there may be a slip when it is dangerous. Is that completely understood?"

"Yes—yes, of course, *Herr* Daimler," one man said. "The directors of espionage in Berlin are clever—never missing minor details that may help us. How does it progress in Berlin?"

"Not bad," Silk told them. "But don't get the idea we've won this war. There are many long months ahead. We may shorten them by our work. Therefore, why lose time? I am waiting to hear your reports or suggestions."

The old bookseller bustled up to Silk.

"But *Herr Doktor* must not be kept waiting. You will talk to him first. The others can wait."

Silk growled a curse. "Of course. My stupidity is excused because I am so weary. The trip was arduous. Take me to the *Doktor* at once—or should I wait for him here?"

"No, no. You will talk to the *Doktor*, yes, but you will not see him. I thought they made that clear in Berlin. *Herr Doktor* is so important and necessary to our work that even the most trusted of us cannot see him."

Silk followed the bookseller into the next room. It was barren except for a single chair placed before what seemed to be a small booth fitted against one wall. Silk walked to the chair and sat down. This was it. *Herr Doktor* might know Daimler or have a description of him which Silk didn't fit. Silk's right hand touched the gun in his pocket.

He couldn't see inside that little booth because curtains were drawn over the entrance. The bookseller left the room, closed the door softly, and Silk wondered what he was supposed to do next.

A VOICE came from the booth so unexpectedly that Silk jumped.

"We are glad to have you here, Daimler."

"I am glad to be here," he answered. "It is an honor—a privilege."

"It is," the voice went on, and Silk noticed there was not the slightest accent. "We are in serious need of you, Daimler—and the others who arrived

with you. There it much to be done, and only an expert can handle the work. What is your specialty?"

"I am a specialist in any kind of destruction," Silk answered promptly. "We all receive the same training."

"Yes, of course. Very well, Daimler, you are assigned to the group meeting here now. They will take their orders from you and also learn how to use bombs and incendiaries. Soon your first objective will be outlined, so you must be ready."

"I am ready now," Silk replied. "But I do not like to work for someone I cannot see, *Herr Doktor.* Remember, my life depends upon using my wits. I would soon be executed if the Americans found me."

There was no answer. Silk leaned forward.

"Herr Doktor," he said loudly. "I expect you to answer. *Herr Doktor—"*

Silk got out of his chair and started toward the booth. This might be a perfect chance to nab a man who was the middle of the spy web. Then Silk sat down again, in a hurry.

"Sorry, Daimler," the voice came back, "something distracted my attention. We must be on the alert every moment. Now, stop worrying about being caught. Tell me, are they planning to send more like you here from the school in... where is that saboteur school located now?"

Instantly, Silk sensed that something had gone wrong. This Dr. Mars was asking leading questions which an impostor could never answer.

"Well," the voice snapped, "why don't you answer, Daimler? That is if you are Daimler."

"Of course I'm Daimler," Silk said angrily, "How else do you suppose I knew about this place? You want information about the school. I cannot give it. Such things are kept secret."

"Ah—a clever reply, even if a bit ambiguous." Dr. Mars laughed. "I won't press you for a more complete answer. There is just one more thing I must know and this does require an answer." The next thing Silk heard was something spoken in German so rapidly that it would have taken an expert to understand it. That meant Dr. Mars was suspicious and using tricks that would betray a spy. Silk knew then that he was lost.

Silk got up quietly, tiptoed toward the booth as that voice kept insisting upon an answer. Suddenly Silk hurled himself through the curtained doorway. Dr. Mars' voice stopped quickly, then he laughed. But Dr. Mars wasn't inside that booth. Only his voice, via an amplifier, and a microphone that picked up Silk's talk.

It also picked up the fact that Silk had charged into the booth.

"Just one moment," Dr. Mars said. "Don't touch the instruments until you have heard me through. You must be a counterespionage agent and a clever one to have found your way into this branch of our organization. I would be willing to spare your life if you'd tell me how you knew Daimler's name and everything about him."

"I must have a moment to think," Silk replied.

HE BACKED out of the booth quietly, so the mike would not pick up the sound of his footsteps. If he could get clear before Dr. Mars issued orders to the spies outside, why—then his hopes were dashed.

"Please don't be so juvenile." Dr. Mars said evenly. "I know you are trying to escape, but that is impossible. The others already know you are an impostor."

Two doors opened and men piled in. All were apparently unarmed, but by weight of numbers they could crush Silk. And there weren't even enough bullets in his gun to account for them all.

The old bookseller was there, wringing his hands nervously, and retreating into a corner as if he expected fireworks at any second.

Silk's right hand shot toward his hip pocket. Instantly, the spies acted, too, and Silk was covered. He didn't raise his automatic. That would have meant instant death, and the probability that he wouldn't get even with even one of those rats.

Silk knew the Black Bat was somewhere around and would act at the proper moment. Yet the force of men here might even check him. Silk dropped the gun and raised both hands level with his shoulders.

One of the spies hurriedly frisked his pockets. Then he swung Silk around and slapped him across the mouth. Silk wiped blood from his lips, obeyed gestures with a gun this spy held and sat down in the single chair.

"Herr Doktor!" The old bookseller's voice was high-pitched and scared. *"Herr Doktor,* are you there? *Herr Doktor!"*

"Yes, Herman." The voice came out of the booth. "You have taken him prisoner? Let him talk if he wishes. I shall ask him a question just once. If he does not answer, then we must take steps. You—the false Daimler—who are you? How did you manage to find out about us?"

"I'm a crystal gazer," Silk barked. "But I'm not afraid to show myself, and that's more than you can say."

"Silence!" the voice thundered. "Herman, there is no time to lose. Not even enough to get the truth out of this man. I think he came alone, but he might be playing for time. Everyone connected with your branch is to remain where they are now. In a few moments a van will roll up. Assemble all records

and equipment. Put them and all your men in the van. It will take you to a new place."

"Yes, *Herr Doktor,*" the bookseller chattered. "But what about this impostor?"

"Assign one of your best men to guard him. Tie his hands and gag him. Wait five minutes and take him back to the store. At the rear door, I will be waiting with a car. Everything is clear now?"

"Yes—quite clear."

"Another thing. Make no phone calls, allow none but the impostor and his guard to leave. There might be government agents posted around the buildings. They will hardly suspect a moving van is involved, but we'll work fast once it arrives. Get on with it."

SILK'S wrists were tied behind his back with a wire. They were taking no chances on his slipping or breaking the bonds. A handkerchief was rumpled into a ball, thrust into his mouth and held there by another handkerchief tied at the back of his head.

The bookseller summoned one of the biggest of the spies and spoke to him in German. Silk could guess what was said, for the huge spy nodded eagerly and looked at Silk speculatively—as a butcher might judge the next steer coming up the ramp for slaughter.

This man took a firm grip on Silk's arm and piloted him through the spy nest into the bookseller's basement and finally upstairs to the store. They exited through the rear door and just as they stepped out, a big sedan pulled up. Silk couldn't see the man at the wheel and the driver did not speak.

CHAPTER V
Visit to the F.B.I.

LOOKING around for signs of the Black Bat, Silk saw none. Perhaps he had been thrown completely off the trail—or captured. No matter what had happened, it looked as if Silk was finished.

He was shoved into the car, the spy sat down beside him and shoved the muzzle of a gun against his ribs so hard that Silk winced. The car backed out of the alley, turned north on the street and rolled away at a moderate rate of speed.

The dashlight was extinguished and the driver's features masked by shadow. He never turned around, never uttered a word. They proceeded across town, hit a speedway and the car gathered speed. In twenty minutes they turned off this highway to a dark, narrower concrete road. The car slowed and finally stopped.

Silk took a quick breath—probably one of his last, he figured. The burly spy was grinning broadly as he opened the door and gave Silk a hard push that sent him tumbling out of the car. Before he could get to his feet, the driver had slid out and was standing beside the darkened car, an ominous shadow.

The spy came around the car, gun in hand. He stepped closer to Silk and slapped him again.

"It is good to kill for the Fatherland," he snarled. "We here in America do not have much chance to enjoy what our troops do in the conquered countries. We must wait—*ja.* Wait until the day when America is invaded and then—You should be glad you will not be here. Back away from me—slowly—and be prepared to die."

Silk didn't move, so the spy shrugged and began retreating himself. The gun was coming on a level with Silk's middle. Apparently, the spy meant to let him suffer a bit before administering the *coup-de-grace.* Silk tensed, preparing to make a run for it. His chances were absolutely nil, but at least he wouldn't be standing there helplessly waiting to be shot.

Just as Silk started to turn, he saw the driver of the car step up to the spy. The driver's right hand came up in an arc and there came the crack of knuckles against jawbone.

As the spy sagged limply against the fender of the car and slowly sat down on the road, the driver sped toward Silk who just stood there and would have been gaping except for the gag in his mouth.

Silk got a glimpse of the driver's face then. Silk started to gurgle.

"I'm sorry," the Black Bat said, "that I had to make you go through this agony, but I had to catch that killer off guard or he might have shot you, anyway. There—the gag is off. I'll try to remove these wires. You're all right, Silk?"

"A little shaky, sir," Silk answered. "I... really, thought I was done for that time. Figured you were this Dr. Mars, whoever he is."

"Whoever he is, is right," the Black Bat said bitterly, "I almost had my hands on him, but he's slippery, Silk. There, you're free. We'll put our friend into the car, tie him up with these same wires and make a present of him to the F.B.I."

SILK drove and they headed beck to town. The spy, who would remain unconscious for at least another hour as a result of another blow from the Black Bat's fist, slumbered on the tonneau floor.

"I watched you enter the bookstore, Silk," the Black Bat said, "but just before you went in, another man appeared. He was muffled to the ears so that it was impossible to see his features. I doubt if even the bookseller, who let him in, saw his face. Grossfetter kept bowing like a Jap to his emperor so I knew the stranger was important. Then you went in. I was trying to find out just where they'd taken you when another man came down the street

acting furtively, so I switched my attention to him.

"He went into the bookstore and disappeared. I went in myself—through a window—and heard someone talking, A one-sided conversation. It was the stranger, still muffled to the ears. The last man to enter was Daimler, the spy whose identity you took."

"Then the first man was Dr. Mars. He must be the ringleader, sir!"

"Undoubtedly. I'll have to question Freytag about that. Anyway, Daimler began talking to this ringleader and must have convinced him you were a fake. The eminent doctor then tricked you into acting to admit your guilt."

"Not so good," Silk muttered. "Daimler is free and they'll soon realize how we got our information."

"Not through Daimler," the Black Bat said sorely. "He must have surprised the doctor and have seen his face. Daimler was killed. He's lying behind a counter with a knife through his throat. The doctor beat a pretty hasty retreat as I moved in. Might have nailed him except that I had you to consider."

"You should have gone after him anyway and never bothered about me," Silk said. "The capture of this master spy is more important than my life."

The Black Bat chuckled. "Not many people would say that—and mean it, as you do, Silk. Anyway. I took the doctor's place at the mike and it being a two-way affair, I knew you were trapped. So I gave certain orders that should gather the F.B.I. a neat parcel of spies."

Silk turned a corner slowly, because of the dim-out.

"I heard about the van, sir. How all records and equipment and men were to be placed aboard it."

"There was a telephone in the bookstore," the Black Bat explained. "I called the F.B.I. and arranged things. They're sending the van full of Federal agents— head west at the next corner. The chief of the local F.B.I. will be expecting me."

Silk rolled past a neat bungalow, slowed, and finally stopped. The Black Bat, hood and cape in place, got out and whispered orders to Silk who grinned and nodded. Then the Black Bat stepped over a low hedge and proceeded across a neighbor's yard. When he reached the rear of the regional F.B.I. director's home he slipped quietly up to the back door.

Reynolds, Regional Director, replaced the phone on its cradle and allowed an expansive smile to cross his face. He had just received a report on the capture of a number of dangerous spies. Suddenly he jumped, and twisted around in his chair. A hand had rested lightly on his shoulder for a moment.

THE only light in the room—a desk lamp—winked out. Reynolds had only a momentary glimpse of a man clad in black from head to foot, whose shadow was silhouetted against the further wall like some gigantic bird. Even Reynolds cried out excitedly.

"You realty didn't expect me to come through the front door, did you?" the Black Bat asked, with an amused chuckle. "If you don't mind, Mr. Reynolds, we'll carry on our conversation in darkness. Better for my peace of mind because, you see, I warmly respect you gentlemen of the F.B.I. and I wouldn't want you to notice anythlng significant about me!"

Reynolds laughed. "Sit down—if you're not already seated. Black Bat, has it occurred to you that I'm violating my oath of office by talking to you? We're supposed to lock you up on sight."

"I know. Some of the local police have the same idea. Only they never quite catch up with me. You were talking to your office when I entered. What's the news?"

"Couldn't be better. I sent a van to the address you gave. My men deployed—some stayed inside the van. The spies came out, carrying all kinds of equipment from bombs to treasonable literature, and of course a few pictures of dear Adolph. Some piled into the van and were grabbed. The others were trapped. All are locked up right now."

"Good. I'm also grateful that you denied yourself the pleasure of assisting in the arrest to wait for me here. Reynolds—there's the devil to pay. A Nazi sub dumped another group of saboteurs on our shores."

"More candidates for the electric chair," Reynolds grunted. "By the way, we discovered a dead man in the bookstore. One of your—ah—ventures? The boys looked for a Black Bat sticker, but there was none. You usually label your victims, I understand."

"I didn't kill him. A man known as Dr. Mars did."

"Dr. Mars," Reynolds jumped up, cracking an elbow on the edge of his desk in the darkness. "Did you say Dr. Mars? Black Bat—that man is America's most dangerous enemy. If you know where he is, tell me!"

"But I don't. He got away. The dead men was Gebhart Daimler—one of those who came here aboard a Nazi sub. Now, is there anything else you wish to know?"

Reynolds sat down again. "Yes, there is. How do you know these things? Who has talked? You can't refuse to answer, Black Bat, because if anything should happen to you, we must have that information."

For a moment there was no answer and

Reynolds tried to peer through the gloom to see if his visitor had silently departed.

He was reaching for the lamp switch when a hand came down on his wrist and held it firmly.

"Please don't," the Black Bat said. "No lights. I didn't reply because I couldn't make up my mind. However, I will say this: a thoroughly honest and patriotic citizen in this city is host to one of those Nazi saboteurs. Not of his own volition. The spy merely selected him more or less at random, I believe.

"This spy has an abject horror of the electric chair and is selling out to secure his own safety."

Reynolds whistled. "Then he's going to expose the lot of them! Why not have your friend turn this man over to us? We'll make him talk."

EMPHATIC refusal came from the Black Bat.

"No! In the first place, this host is not exactly a friend of mine. He trusts me, of course, and I can't violate that trust. Furthermore, the Nazi spy living with him isn't the type who will talk. It's easier to let him go his own way, tell certain facts piecemeal and act on this information. Believe me, it is the best way."

Reynolds leaned back. "All right. I won't argue, because I'm in no position to. First time I ever thought I'd trust a masked man, though. I... Black Bat, are you listening?"

There was no answer. Reynolds slowly swung one arm and encountered nothing but empty space.

"Gone," he said. "Like a ghost! No wonder the underworld fears him. I—"

There was an insistent knocking at the front door. Reynolds hurried there, opened it and the spy who had been assigned to murder Silk toppled forward from a kneeling position and felt flat on his face. Reynolds yanked him up and saw a white card dangling around the man's neck. He read it and chuckled a bit.

> SORRY I HAD TO LEAVE SO ABRUPTLY. HERE IS ANOTHER RAT FOR YOUR CAGE. I ASK ONE FAVOR. PUBLICIZE THE ARREST OF THESE SPIES, BUT DO NOT MENTION THE NAME OF THE BLACK BAT. IMPERATIVE!

Reynolds flung the man into a chair, called his office and ordered agents sent down for the prisoner. Then Reynolds studied the note for a moment. There were certain ways whereby the F.B.I. technical labs could do things with that note. Perhaps even trace it.

Reynolds got up, slowly tore the note into ribbons and tossed them into the burning fireplace.

A man had to have implicit faith when working with a masked, unknown aide. A faith that would brook no tampering. Reynolds had that faith.

CHAPTER VI

New Order Arrogance

NEXT morning, Tony Quinn didn't go to his law offices. He ate breakfast slowly while Silk read the morning editions of the newspapers. Tony Quinn's apparently sightless eyes stared unwinkingly into space.

"That's all there is, sir," Silk concluded. "No mention is made of your name nor the names of any of the prisoners. That's the way you wanted it. Freytag, incidentally, is still sound asleep. I gave him a healthy dose of that drug. Should have made it a lethal one. Frankly, sir, I don't know if I can stand him around here much longer."

"There are a lot of men in Ireland, the Solomons, Australia, Silk. There are men in prison camps in Germany and Japan. They don't exactly enjoy themselves, either. Remember that."

"I'm sorry, sir," Silk apologized. "It's only that this Nazi's arrogance is unbelievable. I've never felt so much like smearing a man in my life. I... shhh! Hear him moving around?"

"Better go up and help him dress," Quinn advised. "He expects most generous treatment and he'll get it, until we've pumped him dry. Go on—help the little Nazi get ready."

Freytag came down half an hour later, smoking a cigarette and idly flicking the ashes wherever they might fall. He slumped into a chair at the breakfast table and called peremptorily for food. Quinn handed over the newspapers.

Freytag read the account, looked up and openly sneered.

"Perhaps I do not believe this," he said. "Perhaps it is just a trumped-up story. There are no names mentioned."

Quinn sighed. "That happens to be up to the F.B.I., Freytag. I'm only an intermediary and an anonymous one at that. However, those men under arrest were the entire group to whom Daimler had been assigned."

Freytag flung the paper aside. "Have them print names so I can be sure. Then we can talk business again, eh? Where is my food? That stupid pig of a servant—"

Silk, lips tightly compressed, carried a tray into the room and served Freytag. He began wolfing the food and smearing half-inch thick slabs of butter on the bread. With a mouthful of food he looked up and spoke.

"Quinn, you will see to it that the names are printed?"

Quinn looked slightly to the left of where Freytag sat.

"No—it can't be done and I'll tell you why: if

those names were printed, the rest of the men who came here with you might decide to do as much damage as possible, then run for it."

"So?" Freytag gulped coffee. "What is that to me?"

"A great deal, Freytag. If that happens, I'll no longer care much whether you talk or not—and there is always the electric chair for spies like you."

Freytag's eyes narrowed. He leaned across the table and waved a knife close to Quinn's face.

"I will kill you first! You and that moronic servant. Have the names printed."

"I'm also thinking of your life," Quinn went on patiently. "I talked to the F.B.I. this morning. Daimler is dead. Knifed through the throat by someone they suspect is the ringleader of your whole spy organization in this country."

"Daimler—dead? Killed by *Doktor* Mars? No—I refuse to believe it!"

Quinn leaned back. "Then go to the morgue and have a look for yourself, Freytag. Daimler was murdered. The same thing will happen to you if this Doktor—whatever-you-said—finds out you're talking."

FREYTAG finished his coffee, and arose.

"I will think it over. Meantime, I cannot stay cooped up here. Through my window, I noticed you have a nice car in the garage. I am going for a drive. Have your man bring it to the side door at once."

"As you wish," Quinn said slowly. "It's dangerous, though. Silk, bring the car around. Our guest is going for a drive."

In a few moments they watched Freytag whip the car from the driveway into the street.

"The big ape must think that's a tank," Silk groaned. "And not too much gas, either, sir. We'll have to use up some ration tickets for Freytag's jaunt. However, it's worth it to get rid of him. The house smells better already, and Carol and Butch are in the lab."

Quinn tapped his way through the house. He never took chances. Prying eyes at a window might belong to Captain McGrath. If he saw Tony Quinn moving about too fast, or using his eyes, the end of the Black Bat might come quickly.

In the lab, Butch sat slumped in a chair, the picture of deep misery. Carol stood beside him, a half smile on her face. Quinn's filmed eyes cleared.

"Butch," he said, "what's wrong?"

"I got flat feet. Can you imagine it? Flat feet. What the heck difference does that make? I got two hands ready to choke them Nazis or Japs. I got fists that can smear 'em—and the Army tells me I ain't no good."

Silk hurried forward. "You mean, they won't accept you?"

"What else?" Butch spread his big arms in despair. "They said there were plenty of guys better than me."

Silk stuck out one hand, palm upward. "Come on, you half-a-man. Fork over that watch I gave you. And Carol's wallet and Mr. Quinn's money. You're not going anywhere and you won't need 'em. I don't think you can tell time anyway. Say, Butch, did they give you a mental test?"

"Yeah." Butch extracted the articles from his pocket. "A lot of crazy questions. Nobody could answer 'em. But it was my feet. Honest, I got to do something about them feet. I can't sit on the sidelines when a scrap's going on."

"You won't be," Quinn assured him. "I'm rather glad this happened, Butch. I need you, and flat feet don't make a particle of difference to me. We're fighting the Nazis right here. A vicious band of them and if we exterminate them we'll do Hitler as much damage as if he lost a battalion of men."

Butch perked up. "Say, that's not so bad. Where are they? Just tell me, Boss, and I'll clean 'em out for you. I'll do a real job. So good I can get the watch back from Silk. Gosh, I liked that watch. The wallet, too. I'll earn 'em back, huh?"

Silk hastily stuffed the watch into his pocket and moved away. Butch sometimes became quite primitive when he really wanted something.

"THERE is a ringleader to this spy outfit—a Dr. Mars," Quinn said. "Obviously, that's phony, but take it from me, the man isn't. He killed a spy—one of his own rather valued men because the fellow saw his face and would recognize him again. That means Dr. Mars is someone prominent enough to have his picture in the papers. He is the man we're after. Break him and the whole organization will crumple."

"Just show me how!" Butch roared. "Just show me, Boss."

"I wish I could, Butch. Now there might be something tied up with Herman Grossfetter who owns the bookstore. Some little lead which even the F.B.I. may miss. Carol, you and Butch start an investigation. Learn everything possible about Grossfetter. Silk won't be able to take much part in this case. Freytag wants him too often."

"I'll send anything, sir, if you'll promise me that when this is over, I have first crack at Freytag," Silk said. "The man's a two-legged hyena."

Quinn nodded. "And a product of Naziism, Silk, Heaven help the world if they ever control it."

Carol arose and walked toward the trapdoor. "Is he really as bad as that?" she asked. "He must be, to get Silk's goat. Do you mind, Tony, if Butch and I stop some place a moment before we investigate Grossfetter?"

"No." Quinn looked surprised. "Why?"

"I've just digested that last statement of yours—about what the world would be like if Freytag and his assorted gang of heels get control. I want to buy some War Bonds, Tony. I can't fight those apes, but I can buy bullets to kill them with. Come, Butch."

Butch helped her down into the tunnel, and just before he climbed into it himself he turned an incredibly sad face toward Quinn.

"She's going to want me to buy some bonds, too, and I'm busted. Flatter then Mussolini's reputation."

Silk closed the trapdoor and walked behind Quinn to the study. Quinn sat down and shook his head slowly.

"I don't like Freytag's gadding about. He'll go straight to Yorkvillle where Germans are thicker than flies. Most of 'em are all right, but a few… if Freytag is ever spotted and recognized in a car registered under my name, it's going to get awfully warm around here, Silk."

Quinn sat alone in the room for almost an hour while his mind sought some way to make Freytag loosen up and spill everything at once. Then the telephone rang. Silk answered.

"It's Commissioner Warner, sir."

Quinn tapped his way to the phone. Warner was chuckling.

"Tony, we've a man who was arrested for speeding—brought here from an uptown station house, since you're concerned and known to be a friend of mine. The car is yours and he claims you let him take it. I doubt that because this fellow is an obnoxious sort who—"

"If his name is Freytag, he's my house guest, and has full permission to use my car, Commissioner. Maybe I'd better come down."

QUINN hung up and cursed mildly. "Get out the coupé," he said to Silk. "Freytag has been pinched for speeding. I've got to get him out of it."

Silk threw up both hands. "No wonder we hate Nazis. I'd let him cool a few hours, if I were you. But no, we've got to pamper the monkey."

Freyteg was in Captain McGrath's office when Quinn arrived at Headquarters. Quinn was escorted in and Freytag jumped to his feet.

"A fine thing. A man cannot drive more than forty miles an hour without being arrested and treated like a criminal. You get me out of this, do you hear?"

"I'll fix it," Quinn said patiently. "You can come along home with me."

"Oh, yeah?" a voice broke in softly.

Quinn turned his head in the general direction of a desk behind which sat Captain McGrath. McGrath was burly, pink-checked, and tough as nails. His hat was thrust back on his head and he had an expansive grin. Tony Quinn felt a cold chill down his back.

"Captain McGrath?" he asked dubiously. "I didn't know anyone else was here—"

"Never mind that," Freytag yowled. "Come along—this is no place for me?"

"Shut up," Quinn said quietly. "Captain McGrath is a good friend of mine. A friend with illusions, perhaps, but I like him. Captain, you sound as though my guest wasn't going to be permitted his freedom."

"Oh, he can run along, I guess," McGrath snickered. "I can't overrule the commissioner. You'd better get started, Quinn. Your pal is impatient."

Silk took Quinn's arm and piloted him out. Freytag trailed behind, expressing his opinion of the police. They let him drive the limousine home and Tony Quinn ground his teeth as Silk trailed the car.

"Captain McGrath has something up his sleeve," Quinn said. "That smug expression on his face tells tales and none of them have a good ending for me."

Captain McGrath was thinking along those same lines when Commissioner Warner, tall, slender, and gray-haired, walked into the detective's office. Warner looked fifteen years younger then his age and could still fight like a wildcat.

"Where is Tony?" Warner asked.

"Gone. His pal—the one who was pinched—ordered him to leave and Quinn did, like a meek little lamb. If a guy spoke to me like Freytag spoke to Quinn, I'd biff him one right on the smootch."

"If you weren't blind," Warner snapped. "Odd, though. Tony never has house guests."

"Want me to tell you why?" McGrath smiled broadly. "Because a house guest would soon get wise that Quinn is the Black Bat. That's what's happened now. Freytag knows he isn't blind, knows he's the Black Bat and is holding it over his head like a club. Else why does Freytag snap orders and act like anything but a desired guest? Sure, he knows the truth and he's going to spill it to me, Commissioner. This is one time we got Quinn over a barrel and I'll prove he's the Black Bat. Through this guy Freytag."

Warner shrugged. "There is a warrant for the Black Bat's arrest. I can't stop you from serving it, Captain. Forget it now, will you? I've more important things to do. Where is that jewelry wholesaler we caught trying to get rid of a lot of diamonds the Nazis swiped from Holland?"

McGRATH jerked a thumb over his shoulder at a door that was partly ajar.

"I told him to park in there. He's a tough baby,

sir. Insists he bought those diamonds in good faith and we can't prove otherwise. Have to let him go."

Warner went into the next room. A man of about forty, with thick glasses and a worried expression on his beefy face, jumped to his feet. Andre Udall, wholesale dealer in gems. He was irate and a bit shaky at the same time.

CHAPTER VII
Door to Danger

CAROL and Butch studied the closed bookstore that afternoon and decided to do nothing about it until darkness set in, though they did keep guard over the place.

F.B.I. men came later and spent a couple of hours inside. They loaded packing cases onto a truck, closed the place up, and departed.

"Doggone," Butch growled, "if there was anything in that store, the Federal boys got it. I think we'll be wasting time."

"I don't," Carol said. "Now you mosey around the neighborhood and find out as much as you can about Herman. I'm going to check on who he pays rents to, and where his money comes from. I'll meet you here at six o'clock, Butch. We'll have dinner and... what's the matter?"

"Gosh, Carol, I can't take you to dinner. I spent all my dough because the boss gave me plenty and I figured.... aw, what's the use?"

Carol laughed and dug into her purse.

"Butch," she said seriously, "before this case is over, I've a hunch you'll have earned all your going away presents and you'll get them back. Consider this a loan. Now get busy."

Like a lumbering Great Dane, Butch trudged away, smiling happily. Slow as he was, Butch possessed a knack for getting information out of people. At that game, too, Carol was also skilled. When they met again over a dinner table, they had learned a great deal.

"Herman was a quiet guy," Butch said. "Never showed he liked old Hitler. All he seemed to do was live with his books. Once in awhile he got cases of books from foreign lands. Seems he specialized in language books and scientific stuff."

"I discovered about the same thing," Carol said. "But what a perfect background for a spy. Foreigners would have an excellent reason for frequenting the bookstore. Well—untll two years ago Herman never had more than a few dollars in the bank at one time. Right now, he has a five-figure account."

"Yeah?" Butch said. "I understood he was practically starving to death."

"Not Herman. He leased the store from a bank, so I found no trail there. His deposits were always made in cash—no trail, either. Butch, we've got to break into that store tonight and take a good look around."

Butch paid the check somewhat proudly. He always liked to dine with Carol. People looked at them. At Carol for her loveliness and at Butch because of his vast size.

They ambled toward the bookstore and darted into the same alley which the Black Bat had used. Butch was not as keen-sighted in the darkness, so he hit the ash can broadside and bowled it over. They flattened themselves against the wall, waiting to see if the racket brought anyone.

Then Carol examined the rear door and shook her head. Butch gently lifted her by the elbows and put her to one side. He leaned against the door and pushed. Wood cracked, metal screws squealed and the door came off its hinges. It was done so neatly that Butch was able to place the door back into its frame and almost completely hide the fact that it had been broken open.

The window shades were all down, but they didn't dare turn on lights. Carol used her smell pencil flash. They found an old-fashioned rolltop desk in a back room. Butch opened it without apparent effort, although the desk was locked. Carol spent only a moment there, for the F.B.I. men had stripped the drawers. All she looked for were secret compartments.

THEY examined the bookshelves too and were methodically going through the books page by page when Carol nudged Butch.

"Something down in the cellar and it wasn't a rat," she whispered. "Duck behind that counter at the rear. I'll hide here." Carol curled up on the floor behind a book display case. Through the glass she could watch the curtained door at the rear. The curtain moved a trifle, then a man poked his head from between them. Carol couldn't make out his features, but he advanced almost directly toward her until she held her breath, anxiously.

He went to bookshelves behind the next counter, studied titles and pulled certain ones from the shelves. These he piled up on the counter until he had about ten there.

Carol crawled on hands and knees until she reached a point just below that stack of books. She wanted one of them. While the spy was busy looking for more, Carol cautiously reached up, began edging the top one off.

Suddenly the spy turned. He was holding a heavy volume and he brought this down violently on Carol's fingers. Involuntarily, she let out a cry and jumped up. The spy shoved a gun at her, then

caught a sharp breath.

"A girl! What is this?"

Carol thought fast. "You're a burglar, that's what. I ought to call the police."

"Look, Beautiful"—the men smiled crookedly—"maybe I am a burglar, but what does that make you? I think we'll go places and have a little talk with certain people I know."

"Now wait a moment," Carol protested. "I don't know what my being here makes me, but I do know what it makes you."

"Well? What does it make me?"

"A dead duck!" Carol said, and Butch brought down one clubbed fist directly on the spy's head.

At the same instant he grabbed the gun and pointed its muzzle upward. But the gun was not fired. The spy was unconscious. They usually were when Butch's fist hit home.

"Thanks, Butch," Carol said. "Help me search him."

They found nothing on the man except a pack of cigarettes and a little money. Carol seized one of the books he had been gathering together and examined it. It was a German book on fractional distillation. A deep scientific treatise.

"This bozo wasn't interested in science," Carol frowned. "He risked a lot coming here for the books. He probably entered through the house next door where the spy headquarters used to be."

Butch picked up one of the books and opened it with his usual roughness. The back cracked. Something landed on the floor. Butch bent down, felt along the boards and straightened up with something between his big fingers.

"It's a chunk of glass, or something," he said.

"Glass, my eye!" Carol hastily broke the back of another volume and spilled a score of perfectly cut flawless diamonds on the counter. "Look, Butch! Diamonds! A fortune in them. Know what? I'll bet the Nazis stole these from the diamond market in Holland. They sent them here to get money for their spy activities. Old Herman was the banker."

Butch looked around. "Carol, what say we just trade this stuff into good old War Bonds? Make Hitler's dough work against him, huh?"

Carol laughed. "You have good ideas, Butch, but we can't do it yet. Break all those books open. Dump the diamonds into my bag. Hurry, before our pal wakes up."

WORKING furiously, they took more volumes from the shelf until they were certain the place had been looted. Then Carol examined the unconscious spy, drew Butch into a corner and gave him whispered orders. She slipped out the back door and Butch retreated to the rear room,

Before long, the spy stirred and groaned. Finally, Butch saw him sit up and begin massaging his forehead. Then Butch carried on a conversation with an imaginary person.

"Okay, Chief. I'll send for a car to take that monkey away.... No, he's out like a light Won't wake up for half an hour. I'll keep an eye on him.... Let you out? Oh, sure. I forgot I have the back door key. This way."

Butch's feet pounded heavily on the floor. The spy was already standing up. He started to tiptoe toward the front door, pulled the curtain aside half an inch, then turned the spring lock knob. The next moment he was outside, running like the wind.

Butch let him go, followed after a moment or two, and stood in the middle of the sidewalk slightly puzzled. Carol had said she would follow the man and Butch was to follow her. But things had happened so fast he had lost the trail before he got started.

Then Butch saw a crimson streak on a wall. It was a crude arrow, made with a lipstick. He trotted in the direction it indicated. Soon he found more of the arrows and then he saw Carol walking sedately up a fairly crowded street. Half a block ahead of her was the spy.

From there on, the spy was easy to follow. In the gloom of the bookstore, he had been unable to see Carol well and although he kept looking around now and then, he never suspected that she was trailing him. He stopped at a corner, finally, and pretended to be studying the contents of a store window. Carol went on by without a pause, but Butch held back.

The spy turned the corner and walked briskly toward a twelve story brick building. Over its door was the sign:

JUSTICE STORAGE COMPANY
MOVING AND STORAGE

The spy tapped on the heavy door and was instantly admltted. Carol hurried to join Butch.

"This must be another hideout," she said. "I don't know what to do. Butch. If Tony were here, he'd think of something, but we can't even call on him. That man staying at the house will smell a rat."

"I dunno about that," Butch said. "Not a rat, Carol. The guy's been smelling himself so long he's used to rats. Suppose we try to get in here, huh? Or I'll do it alone."

Carol thought deeply. "Well—we got to do something, The most sensible thing would be to notify the F.B.I. anonymously. But since when did the Black Bat or his aides do the obvious? See if you can get in, Butch. Right through the front door."

Butch grinned, gazed at his huge hand and

closed the fingers into a mighty fist. Carol looked up and down the street, signaled all clear, then stepped close to the wall, just outside the door.

Butch rapped on it smartly. He heard a key turn, a bolt slip back and he signaled Carol to be ready. The door opened and a bulky man peered out.

"You wish to see someone?" he asked suspiciously.

"Yeah," Butch said. "Got to talk low. Can't tell who is around. Listen—"

The door guard leaned closer and Butch's mighty hand closed around his throat. There was not even the semblance of a squawk.

CHAPTER VIII
Dilemma

DURING dinner, Karl Freytag entertained his host with stories of his service in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Every time Tony Quinn grimaced in distaste, Freytag laughed harshly.

"That is what you arc all coming to unless you talk peace with us."

Quinn's blank eyes were focused far beyond Freytag.

"I've been wondering about that," he said slowly. "Let's suppose the Nazis do get over here. What happens to you, then? They'll know you double-crossed them to save your own neck."

"They will never know," Freytag boasted. "I shall say my comrades were ferreted out and that, because of my cleverness, I got away. However, I had to remain hidden. Should there be a bombed department store, a ship, a shipyard, I shall claim that as my work."

"Oh." Quinn put down his water glass. "I see. The training you received in the art of lying will prove useful against those who taught you. I hope, if that comes to pass, you will consider me as having been your friend."

"Perhaps."

Freytag emptied his wine glass, called for more, and Silk served it.

"However," Freytag went on, "incapacitated people are not tolerated by the New Order. Instructions might come through to kill anyone dependent on others. I recall a home for mentally defective children in Poland. We needed the building to house our troops. There was no place to send those half wits so—" He shrugged.

"I'll remember that little episode," Quinn said. "Now how about getting down to business? Who is on the schedule for tonight? The F.B.I. men are waiting for my call."

Freytag smiled broadly. He was enjoying himself. "Perhaps I won't tell you," he taunted.

Quinn didn't smile. "I think you will, Freytag. Otherwise, you might have a gruesome experience. They'll slit your trouser leg, shave your head. Plunk you into a hard, uncomfortable chair. But the occupant is never aware that his chair is hard. A man will turn a dial, a switch—"

"Stop!" Freytag shrieked. "Mention that again and I shall never reveal another thing! I mean it!"

"Very well. Then we're finished with stalling. I made a bargain with you and I'll keep it. You will, too. What saboteur goes where tonight?"

"It is Gauss. Wolfram Gauss. On Blane Street there is a furniture storage place called 'Justice Storage.' Gauss' band meets there and tonight he goes to give instructions. They are to concentrate on vital shipping points—like Grand Central Station here in New York, Union Station in Washington and others in other large cities."

Silk entered with a tray. More brandy, Freytag sniffed at its aroma.

"May I offer you a night cap, sir?" Silk said.

Quinn took the right glass. Freytag swallowed his in two gulps and banged the glass on the table. Freytag was getting a bit boiled.

"I think I will listen while you call the F.B.I.," he said, "It should be interesting."

"As you wish. But we have half an hour or so yet. More wine, Freytag?"

TEN minutes later, Freytag was sprawled across the table, sound asleep. Quinn and Silk had started to carry him upstairs when the door buzzer sounded. Silk cursed. Quinn carried Freytag the rest of the way and put him to bed.

When Tony Quinn tapped his way down the stairs, he saw a man with thick glasses peering up at him. Quinn extended his hand vaguely. The man took it.

"I only wish to give you a warning," he said. "Never mind who I am. Ah... there is no one else in the house excepting your servant?"

"We're quite alone," Quinn said, wondering what this was all about.

"Good," the visitor said, but he pronounced it "Goot!" "I hate the police. Especially that *dumkopf* Captain McGrath. This afternoon, I heard McGrath tell the police commissioner he could prove you are the Black Bat. How, I do not know, but he sounded certain of himself. That is all I have to say. Whether or not you are the Black Bat makes no difference to me. I only hope I hurt this Captain's chances of proving anything. I will go now. I... are you positive no one else has heard me speak? Or seen me?"

"Of course. Why don't you stay awhile? Have a drink. I know Captain McGrath believes I am the Black Bat, but he is mistaken. Blind Bat would be

a better name for me. Why don't you answer? Where have you gone?"

As Quinn spoke, he watched the man move softly toward the door and dart out, to disappear. After a minute Quinn closed the door softly and turned to face Silk.

"That's the darnedest thing that ever happened to me," he said. "And the man obviously was telling the truth."

Silk went to a window and peeked out. "What I noticed mainly was his great interest in determining whether or not anyone else was in the house. Do you suppose it could have been a stall so he might pop in and see if Freytag was here?"

Quinn ran fingers through his hair. "You got me. I'm worried about other things, too. What has happened to Carol and Butch? They've been gone for hours, with the last telephone report at five o'clock. Carol was then running around with a fortune in diamonds in her handbag."

"And all because of that punk upstairs," Silk grumbled. "So help me, some night I'll give him a triple dose of that drug."

Quinn returned to the study. Killing time kept him keyed-up, but it was still too early for the Black Bat to operate. He flew best in inky darkness.

Just about the time he decided to go into action, the door buzzer sounded again. Tony Quinn's sensitive ears told him that two men were on the porch, talking in friendly voices. Then Silk was admitting them.

Quinn half arose from his chair.

"Commissioner Warner," he said. "It's nice of you to drop in. There's someone with you—"

"See?" Warner nudged his companion. "I told you he sees with his ears. Tony, this is Mr. Ted Landis and he wants to retain you."

"How do you do?"

Quinn shook hands with Landis and with the eyes they believed to be blind he saw a tall man with an aggressive chin, a neat mustache and graying hair. He was expensively dressed and had the manners of a diplomat.

ALL three of them sat down and Landis spoke.

"Mr. Quinn, I'm in need of an attorney of reputation who will believe me. I'm a commission agent. I obtain government war contracts for defense plants on a commission basis. Now please don't misunderstand. I'm not a profiteer. My commission is small, but I like the work."

Quinn nodded. "Thought I recognized the name. You are rather well known, Mr. Landis, but like all other commission agents you're in hot water—Congressionally, I mean. What can I do to help?"

"Study the situation, give me advice. Tell me how to convince that Senate investigating committee I am necessary. Warner tells me you're a specialist in convincing people."

"I'll do what I can," Quinn agreed. "Give me a few days to study the law and make some inquiries. I'll contact you. And, Commissioner, thanks for bringing me a client. I know how busy you are. Anything new going on?"

"Run-of-the-mill," Warner said. "Just one exception today. We picked up a jewelry wholesaler on suspicion of peddling diamonds stolen by the Nazis from Occupied Europe. We had nothing much on him and we turned the matter over to the F.B.I."

"Silk read something about a case like that to me this morning," Quinn said. "Man named—"

"This man was named Andre Udall," Warner said. "A Slav, I believe. Short fellow with thick glasses. You wouldn't know him. Well, our interview here was short and to the point. Sorry to leave so quickly, Tony, but duty calls."

Quinn offered his hand and each man took it warmly. In the hallway, Warner excused himself and went back to where Quinn was sitting. He dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Tony, I want to warn you. Mind you, I don't believe for a moment that you are the Black Bat. But McGrath will never be convinced. He's gunning for you and intends to use your house guest as a pawn. Warn him."

"Thanks," Quinn grinned. "But an innocent man has nothing to fear. Freytag is just on old friend of a college pal of mine. He isn't staying long."

After the car pulled away, Silk hurried in.

"That jeweler they were questioning! He's the man who came here tonight with that crazy warning. Diamonds, sir! Didn't Carol report that she uncovered a cache of them in that spy nest?"

"She did, and things are beginning to pop. Make certain that Freytag won't awaken. I'll switch to my regalia and meet you in the lab. We've got to work fast, Silk. Carol and Butch may have blundered into something too big for them to handle."

Moments later, Silk drove the cheap coupé along Blane Street. They spotted the darkened neon sign over the door of the Justice Storage Company's warehouse, but they saw something else, too, and Quinn hastily pulled down the brim of his wide hat.

Cars were pulled up in front of the building, helter-skelter. Men were moving in and out. An ambulance siren moaned and Silk got out of the way. The ambulance stopped in front of the place and Silk pulled up about four hundred yards from it.

White-coated men got stretchers out of the ambulance and hurried inside. They returned, carrying someone on a stretcher. A heavy man, for the ambulance attendants almost buckled under his

weight. Then two men in civilian clothes appeared, carrying a second stretcher. It was much lighter.

BOTH were quickly stowed into the ambulance. One civilian climbed in with the doctor and the ambulance darted away.

"Butch—and Carol!" Silk murmured.

"We can't be positive," the Black Bat said. "We can't even allow ourselves to think that. Get away from here. Whatever was in the storage house is lost to us. Those are G-men and they've taken over."

At the Black Bat's orders, Silk stopped the car a dozen blocks away, got out and hurried into a busy drugstore. He dialed a number which the Black Bat had given him.

Silk imitated the Black Bat's voice to perfection. "Mr. Reynolds? You can probably guess who this is. I've another job for you. At the Justice Storage Company on—"

"Hold it," Reynolds chuckled. "We beat you to the draw this time. Or wait—wasn't that you who phoned a short time ago? We went to that place and rounded up a nice mess. Two people were taken out. One dead, the other badly injured. What's this all about, Black Bat? If you didn't phone—"

"I'm sorry," Silk said. "Someone was helping me with this matter. That person must have notified you. Goodbye." Silk hung up blindly. His eyes were blurred as he fled through the drugstore. He got into the car beside the Black Bat.

"One of those we saw taken out was dead. The other isn't expected to live. Let's go home and work on Freytag! Make him talk so we can round up the rest of these killers at once."

"We'll go home," the Black Bat said, "but no false moves, Silk. It's too important for that. We can't even consider Butch or Carol. Drive back, as swiftly as you dare."

CHAPTER IX
Powder Keg

BUTCH and Carol, while Tony Quinn was still at his dinner table, had promptly moved into the storage warehouse after their forcible entry. Butch laid the door guard he had knocked out on the floor, motioned Carol to turn around and Butch bent over the guard. His fist swung twice and with this additional safeguard knew that that guard would raise no alarm for at least an hour.

"Okay," Butch whispered hoarsely, "I fixed his wagon good. Now what do we do?"

"We'll start looking around quietly," Carol replied. "If we find spies here, we call the F.B.I. We can't take chances, Butch, don't you see?"

Butch nodded glumly. "Yeah. Only I figured to bust a couple of those bums. Let's go."

They prowled the first floor carefully. Weak lights illuminated the place and made their progress comparatively easy. They found an elevator shaft, but the cage was out of sight on an upper floor. It was a huge elevator, meant to convey heavy furniture.

"They must be upstairs." Carol whispered. "I... Listen! Someone at the door."

Butch could move fast and silently for a man his size. He sped to the front door, then opened it—with his left hand. His right was busy being a fist.

Butch had to look down at the man outside. He saw a runt of a man with thick glasses and a fat face.

"Don't stand there like an idiot," the man snapped. "I am Wolfram Gauss and I am expected."

"Yeah," Butch said. "Where you from? We got to be careful about people we don't know."

"From the *Ruckwanderer* School, Stupid. I said my name was Wolfram Gauss. Move aside and let me in."

"Now wait a minute!" Butch put one big hand against Gauss' chest. "Anybody can walk up and say he is Wolfram—whatever you said. I got orders not to take chances."

"Then I came on a submarine, along with four others. Dr. Mars expects to be here tonight and I have final instructions about our plans. Now will you let me in?"

"Sure," Butch grinned. "You're welcome. Come on in!"

Butch grabbed him by the neck, lifted the startled man off the floor and carried him deeper into the warehouse, holding him at arm's length. Gauss' legs and arms were moving frantically.

"Look what I got," Butch grinned at Carol. "Heck, why do they have to be so doggone small? I'd rather poke a guy who can slug back, but I guess he gets poked anyhow."

"Hurry it up," Carol said.

Butch took about five minutes. Four minutes and fifty-nine seconds were spent looking for somewhere to hide Gauss. Butch found an old trunk in a corner and dumped him into this.

He and Carol headed for the stairway. After climbing two flights, they stopped to listen, and still heard nothing.

"We'll keep going to the floor where the elevator is stopped," Carol said. "And, Butch, you did well with Herr Gauss. He is one of the spies who came over on the submarine. This means we've saved the Black Bat a job—thanks to you!'

"Just give me a crack at the bozos hiding in here and I'll show you something better," Butch grunted.

THEY kept climbing until they reached the floor where the elevator was stopped. Now they did hear voices though muffled and indistinguishable. Butch paused long enough to remove his shoes, tie the laces together and swing them around his neck.

They crept up to a door through which light shone. The whole spacious floor was covered with packing cases of all sizes. By moving from one to another of these cases, Butch and Carol made their way close to the door. The spy who had fled from the bookseller's store was talking.

"As I told you—six of them. All big, and waiting there for me. They had guns, too, and they made me surrender. Already these men had found the diamonds. How? By examining everything in the store. Two were left to guard me. The others went out, so then I was able to escape."

"You were not followed?" someone asked.

"No. The two men left could not do so. I—hit them hard enough. Perhaps they are dead. I don't care. A fortune in diamonds was stolen from us. I had to defend them even if I did lose."

"Doctor Mars is not going to like the loss of those diamonds," another man said. "Perhaps he comes here tonight. I would rather be somewhere else. And when does Gauss come? It is dangerous for us to assemble this way all the time."

"Have patience, Otto," someone else chided. "Gauss is a stranger, but he will find the place all right. Just relax. Meanwhile, why not get ready for him? Two of you open the cases. Tonight, we deal America a blow it shall not forget in a hurry. With luck, it will be greater than the Black Tom explosion during the last war."

Carol and Butch held their breaths. Two men came out of the room and walked within ten feet of where they were crouched. Carol watched them line up four big packing cases. Each was marked:

"FRAGILE—DISHES"

They opened the tops of each case, being careful and slow in their work. Both grinned and nodded when the contents were exposed. This required about fifteen minutes during which Butch and Carol had to remain frozen in place.

As the two men walked back toward the lighted room, they were checked by the sound of muffled shots. The others hurried out. There were six altogether.

"It comes from downstairs," one said, "Perhaps Gauss is in trouble. Hurry!"

They rushed for the elevator, and the lift dropped. Carol and Butch hurried over to the four opened packing cases and both gasped at what they saw.

Inside those cases were no dishes, but cleverly constructed bombs—cans of blasting powder, sticks of dynamite and tins of T.N.T.

"Enough to blow up half of New York," Carol whispered, awed. Then she faced Butch. "I don't understand that shooting downstairs. Butch, did you search Gauss before you tossed him into that trunk?"

Butch groaned. "No. Doggone, I clean forgot all about it. Say, that little runt must have been packing a rod. He couldn't get out of the trunk so he's shooting at the lock, maybe. But I can't understand it! I gave him a one-hour punch and it's no more than twenty-five minutes since he passed out. The runt must have had an awful thick skull."

"We can't get down," Carol said. "The elevator runs right beside the stairway and it's an open freight elevator so they'd spot us in a moment. But when they find Gauss and the door guard, we're going to be on a spot. Let's find a place to hide."

IN A corner, packing cases were pushed close to the wall. Butch pulled a few away until he and Carol could slip behind them. Then he pulled those cases back. They set down, huddled against the wall. Neither dared speak because they could hear the elevator mechanism whirring.

Soon heavy feet pounded across the floor and Gauss' voice was speaking,

"I saw only one—a giant of a man. But there are probably others and they haven't left. We know that, because otherwise F.B.I. men would be here by now. Therefore, we must prevent the traitors from leaving."

"Traitors, *Herr* Gauss?" someone queried. "Do you mean they are our men?"

"I am not sure," Gauss answered. "Dr. Mars has issued a warning that some man known as the Black Bat who is working against us knows a great deal, and that his information could only come from one of the five men who came over on the submarine."

"The Black Bat!" one of the spies groaned. "Gauss, you do not know him! He is not human, I tell you. If he is here, in this building, we are doomed!"

"Be quiet," Gauss snapped. "I was told the Black Bat wears some kind of silly costume and the man who hit me did not. I think F.B.I. men are here, but maybe only one or two, and unable to act against us. We take care of them, then maybe we fix this Black Bat. All of you begin to search. Every corner, every case. Miss nothing!"

"*Herr* Gauss," one of the men interrupted, "this building is so large one or two men could move about quite freely. We must smoke them out into the open, and I know now. There are gas masks in one of the cases. We shall all don them, then release tear gas. It will be very simple."

"If I had known you possessed those things, I should have thought of it myself," Gauss approved. "Get busy and we shall see what kind of pigs we smoke out, eh?"

"If that stuff gets us—and it will because there isn't a window in this whole darn place—we're done for," Carol whispered into Butch's ear. "Got to think of something else. Quickly, too!"

"Let me go out there and sail into them," Butch begged. "They'll be so busy you can beat it with the elevator. Honest, Carol, I can take those Heimies alone."

"No, you can't. Thanks for the chivalrous gesture,. Butch, but I won't leave you here to die while I escape. There must be some other way."

Carol peered thoughtfully at the elevator. She pulled Butch closer and whispered. Butch didn't like the idea, but he agreed.

Carol slipped from behind the row of boxes, fumbled in her purse among a fortune in diamonds and got out a pack of matches and a package of cigarettes. There were only five smokes, but that should do the trick.

CLUTCHING these, she skirted the area where the spies were digging out gas masks and tear gas from other cases. She reached the boxes filled with explosives, and swiftly opened a can of powder. She spilled the stuff on the floor in front of the box and laid the half open can on top of the other explosives. This done, she climbed onto the box and sat on the edge of it. She put a cigarette between her lips, struck a match and touched flame to the cigarette.

"Are you gentlemen looking for something?" she asked in a clear voice. All activity ceased instantly. Scurrying feet coming in Carol's direction, she saw the eight spies start running toward her. Carol took a long drag on the cigarette, then held it poised just above the open can of powder.

"I wouldn't come any closer," she warned.

CHAPTER X
Visitors with Guns

GAUSS stopped as if he had encountered an invisible wall. He spread out both arms to check the others. Most of them wore gas masks and looked like something out of a fantastic nightmare.

"Look out with that cigarette, you stupid fool!" Gauss yelled.

"I'm not stupid," Carol smiled blithely. "I know one spark will probably blow the roof off this place and all of us sky-high. But you forced me to do this."

"We forced you?" Gauss barked. "How? Who are you anyway and— Please! The cigarette. No so close. One tiny spark—"

"Naturally." Carol spoke calmly, though she was literally sitting on a powder keg and knew it. "I heard orders issued to use tear gas. No one can withstand it—so I decided to come into the open. Come and get me, if you wish."

Gauss took one step forward and Carol's cigarette hovered just above the powder. Gauss stopped abruptly.

"I happen to know," Carol went on, "just what would happen to me if you laid hands on me. I don't want to die, but if I must, it will be much easier if you men accompany me."

"She is bluffing," Gauss growled. "When that cigarette burns out, we have her!"

Carol puffed complacently. When her cigarette was down to a point where it burned her fingers, she extracted another from the pack and lit the fresh one, chain fashion. She scaled the butt high into the air.

The spies were slowly forming a circle about her so that any hope of escape was gone. No one spoke again. Gauss eyed her angrily, but patiently, too. Both sides were at an impasse, but time worked for him and not for Carol.

She was on her fourth cigarette, with only one left. The time to smoke it came only too soon. She flipped away the fourth butt and puffed deeply, always careful to hold the cigarette so that she could quickly drop it into the powder.

"Well, boys," Carol finally said. "I'm fresh out of cigarettes. Would one of you oblige a lady by throwing a pack to me? And from where you are standing."

Gauss dug into his pocket, threw a pack and it landed just below the packing case. Carol gave it a quick glance and laughed.

"I'm not as easy as that, boys. If I got down to pick up the pack, you'd shoot me. Well—none of us expect to live forever, and our demise will be quite sudden and painless, to say the least."

They just stood there watching her through the windows of the gas masks. All except Gauss who had flung his aside.

Her cigarette was becoming shorter and shorter. It looked as though Gauss was intent on calling her bluff. One thing, she had made him forget Butch. Carol kept glancing at the elevator. She heard a faint thud, then a tap.

Carol took the last drag of the cigarette. Looking directly at Gauss, she forced a smile to her lips.

"Well, it begins to look as though this is the end of the party. I could surrender on your promise to let me go, but I happen to know how much value to place on a Nazi's word. If I give up, you'll kill me

and in a way far more painful than being blown to bits. My way, I'll have the satisfaction of knowing eight murderers will not be free to kill and maim others."

"Wait," Gauss said nervously. "We admit you hold the whip hand so long as that cigarette burns. Listen to me. Do nothing foolish. We promise to leave the building at once—every last man. Then you are free to go also. You have my word we shall only try to get away."

CAROL surveyed the tiny butt of her cigarette, puffed on it lightly to get a glowing spark, then looked up.

"I don't believe you," she said. "There isn't a mortal soul left in the world who would believe a Nazi—but I could take the chance. Remember, I have matches—plenty of them. All of you go downstairs to the first floor. Escape if you wish, but I remain here just in case there is any treachery."

"We go at once." Gauss was plainly frightened. "We leave the building immediately. Do not drop the cigarette!"

"I can hold onto this butt about one more minute," Carol said. "After that I'm not responsible. Beat it while you have the chance, even though I'm sure you'll pull some kind of a trick."

Gauss barked a command and all eight men started moving fast toward the elevator. Three of them got onto the lift. Carol gave a choked scream.

"The cigarette is burning me! I can't—hold onto it!"

"Himmel!" Gauss shrieked. "Down—quickly! The girl is mad!"

The other five men jumped aboard the elevator. Something snapped, and screams rose from eight terrorized throats. The big elevator went down all right, but it dropped without benefit of brakes or cables. A moment later there was a terrific crash far below.

Carol held the still lighted cigarette at arm's length away from the powder. Then she dropped it, slid to the floor, and took a couple of tottering steps forward. She clutched at the edge of another packing case.

She had a glimpse of Butch tearing down the stairway like a charging bull. She gave one last frightened look back at the cases of explosives, then went down two flights of stairs on legs that threatened to buckle at any moment.

On the first floor, Butch was returning from a clean-up job and his face was still grim.

"Three of 'em weren't knocked out by the drop,"

Carol took a long drag on the cigarette, then held it poised over the open can of powder.

he explained, "so I took care of 'em. Carol, you look awful white. Maybe you don't feel good, huh?"

"Oh, I feel fine. Just great. All that bothers me is the memory of four packing cases chock full of T.N.T. and me sitting on the edge of one smoking a cigarette while you sneaked upstairs to the elevator housing and arranged things. I'm afraid the memory will linger, Butch."

"Yeah—" Butch grinned widely—"I was getting a little nervous watching you. Boy, that cigarette was close to the powder a couple of times. Even after I cut the cable almost all the way through and busted the brakes, I thought we'd all get blown through the clouds."

"There's a telephone in that small office out front," Carol said. "Phone Mr. Reynolds of the F.B.I. Tell him there are spies here—eight of them."

"Six," Butch corrected. "One big lug got his neck busted and that little guy who came in a submarine—he's all washed up, too. Chunk of the elevator floor went through him. I'll call just as soon as I put on my shoes."

THE call had been made, the G-men had completed their clean up, and Butch and Carol had long been gone from the powder-magazine warehouse when Silk and the Black Bat, after their quick visit to the scene of the Nazi spies' latest activities, again parked the coupé near Tony Quinn's home. The Black Bat slipped out first, moved down the darkened street like a ghost and reflected that the dim-out was made to order for him. Silk soon joined him in the garden house and they sat down on a bench.

"You know," Silk said. "I'm sorry now that I didn't give Butch that watch anyhow. Poor guy liked it so much."

The Black Bat only sighed deeply. Then he opened the trapdoor and lowered himself into the tunnel. Silk followed, closing the well-concealed trap behind him.

Silk clambered up the ladder to enter the lab. When a huge hand came down to help him, Silk looked up and let out a stifled yelp. That was Butch and so far as Silk knew, Butch was supposed to be in the morgue.

"Aw, they can't kill a couple of tough guys like me and Carol," Butch said, when he got a chance to explain. "Boy, you should have seen her perched on that box of explosives! Cool as ice, and these spies so scared they could hardly stand up."

"If I'd been on my feet, I wouldn't have been able to stand, either," Carol confessed, as the Black Bat removed his regalia. "All I'm sorry for is scaring the wits out of you, Tony. We didn't dare phone with Freytag using the house as his stomping grounds."

Tony Quinn loaded his pipe and smiled wryly. "I'll admit things looked pretty black. Especially when we saw them carry two people out of the building. The others, I suppose, were taken away before we arrived. Silk was worried, too. Why, he even felt sorry for taking that watch back from Butch."

"No kidding?" Butch started walking toward Silk. "You mean that, Silk? I'm going to get the watch, maybe?"

"When you get rid of those flat feet," Silk said. "Now keep away from me, you big baboon. Every time you slap me on the shoulder, my bridge work slips a notch!"

"Well, anyway, Freytag's second tip was on the level, even if Carol and Butch beat us to the punch," Quinn said. "The nest was cleaned out to the last man. Now I wonder if I could get Freytag to give me the details about the last pair of saboteurs."

"Tony," Carol said anxiously, "there's a Dr. Mars who seems to be tremendously important in this. He probably is their leader and if so, won't he smell a rat when two of the five saboteurs were rounded up just before they got ready to put their plans into action?"

"He probably has already," Quinn said. "In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if Dr. Mars hasn't already visited me. That jeweler for instance, who kept asking whether or not we were alone. Then a fellow named Ted Landis who may have talked Commissioner Warner into bringing him here. Landis kept looking around plenty. Yet both of these men may be entirety innocent and our next door neighbor may be Dr. Mars. Who can tell at this stage of the game?"

Silk turned suddenly. "Someone coming through the gate, sir. I'd better get into the house quickly. You, too."

Tony Quinn picked up his cane. "Stay here, Carol, and you too, Butch. I'll get rid of whoever this is as fast as possible."

Quinn hurried to his accustomed chair in front of the fireplace and his strange eyes were blank and dead again. Silk waited until he knew Quinn was safely in the study, then opened the door. He gave a leap backward as two guns were aimed at his chest.

"Do not make a sound," one of the two men then cautioned.

He was a brute of a man. The other was lighter of build, but he had deadly little eyes—the look of a man who liked to kill.

"I—I don't understand." Silk's voice quavered a bit. "You must have made a mistake. This is the home of—"

"Tony Quinn," the big man snapped. "It is also the home of Karl Freytag. Where is he?"

"Who?" Silk asked bluntly.

"Never mind this stupid dolt." The smaller man moved forward, "We find Quinn and make him talk. Watch this servant. He looks tricky to me."

CHAPTER XI
A Pleasant Frame

IN THE study, Quinn heard every word of this dialogue and instantly went into action. As blind Tony Quinn he could do nothing, but Carol and Butch were in the lab and might be able to help if things became desperate. He dashed across the room and opened the secret door.

"Listen in and act according to your own judgment," he told the startled pair in the lab.

When the two men swaggered through the room, Quinn was back in his chair, cane between his legs and leaning forward slightly.

"I heard angry voices," he said in the plaintive voice of the blind. "Silk, is something wrong?"

"Two men, sir. They have guns. I told them there was some error."

The smaller man walked up to Quinn, bent and looked intently into his eyes. He saw their utter blankness, saw the deep, ugly scars around them, and shrugged.

"Quite blind," he said. "That makes it all the easier. Mr. Quinn, your servant told the truth about our having guns. We are ready to use them, too—unless we get an answer to our questions."

"But what do I know that requires guns here to make me talk?" Quinn asked. "Or are you a couple of thugs I sent to prison during my days as district attorney?"

"No, we are not thugs. We are here on a mission and it would be well if you produced Karl Freytag. We know he is here. This afternoon he was seen driving a car registered in your name. Well? Do you speak up or shall we break your wrist to begin with?"

Silk started forward angrily and a gun was prodded into his middle. Quinn raised one hand in a gesture for patience.

"Please—I can sense a lot of things that I cannot see. I know my servant is being threatened. He knows nothing beyond the fact that Karl Freytag is here. He came two days ago with a letter from a college friend of mine. At least, I thought it was written by my friend. I can't see to read or recognize handwriting."

"We care nothing about that. Is Karl Freytag in the house now?"

"No. He has gone out for a walk. He is an odd chap. Goes out frequently and never explains where he goes, or why. He'll be back soon, I expect."

"We wait," the little spy grunted sarcastically. "I would like to see anyone put us out. But we won't wait in this room. I will search the house while my partner remains to watch you."

"Very well," Quinn shrugged. "Though I feel it best to warn you that Freytag could kill both of you with one blow. The man is huge—strong as an ox."

Quinn waited. If those two knew Freytag, they would never fall for this line. If they didn't and Carol was on the job, something might develop.

"He may be big," the small man grunted. "That makes no difference to a man with a gun. Watch these two closely, Hans. I am going to search the house."

Hans sat down, gun ready.

"I heard your friend call you Hans," Quinn timidly. "Are you Germans?"

"It makes no difference what we are," Hans barked. "Consider yourself lucky if you live to see daylight. Ha, ha! To see daylight! A blind man. You would be better off dead."

THE small man came downstairs about ten minutes later. He looked disappointed.

"Freytag is not in the house. I am sure of that, I found his room. He was sleeping in his bed not so long ago, yes?"

"Yes," Silk snapped. "That's about all he does. Sleep and eat. I thought he was a fake the moment I laid eyes on him. If all you want is Freytag, take him and welcome. I believe he came here with forged identifications."

The little man sat down, but he kept his eyes on Quinn and Silk. He was going to be hard to fool and he also would be quick on the trigger. Quinn began to feel a bit moist around the collar.

Then the door buzzer sounded. Silk started to move and the gun was jammed against him again. The little man jumped up, hesitated a moment, then turned to Silk.

"It may be Freytag, or someone else. We cannot take chances. Go to the door. If it is someone other than Freytag, send him away. If it is Freytag, for your own well-being, don't tip him off. Just let him in and close the door. Is that clear?"

"Yes," Silk said sullenly.

"Then be sure you obey—because if you don't this blind master of yours will die promptly. Now answer the door."

Silk couldn't figure it out. Freytag should have been in a drugged sleep upstairs and yet the spy had found only an empty bed. Now someone was at the door. Was it Freytag?

Silk opened the door and almost gave himself away with a gasp of amazement. Butch stood there, a finger against his lips. Silk backed away and signaled that the spies were in the study. Butch nodded ponderously and started walking toward the room.

"I will see Quinn before I go back to bed," he said loudly.

Butch stepped into the room and a pair of guns were firmly pressed against his ribs. He raised both big arms shoulder high, looked from one man to the other and gave a long sigh.

"So it has come," he said feebly.

"Sooner than you thought, eh, Karl? What's the matter with you? Don't you know it is suicide to disobey orders? You are coming with us, Karl, and any resistance will mean your death. Put your hands down, walk between us. There is a car just around the corner. Remember—no tricks."

Butch began walking slowly. Quinn's cane tapped rapidly as he followed and got quite close to the trio. Hans waved Quinn back until he remembered Quinn couldn't see him.

Silk opened the door and both spies put their guns into side pockets. Quinn suddenly tossed his cane into the air, caught it expertly by the point and swept the crooked end toward the feet of Hans, the big spy.

Hans tripped on it, lurched sideward and Butch turned like a panther. Before the smaller spy could bring his gun to bear, Butch pasted him squarely in the mouth. Blood spurted. Another blow cracked against his jaw and he went hurtling across the hall, hit the wall with a terrific thud, and sat down.

Hans was on his feet again, tugging at the gun in his pocket. Not to shoot Butch, but to kill Quinn. The man was half mad with rage. Quinn stood there, immobile, still posing as a blind man. He was placing his life in Butch's hands.

BUTCH'S big hand fastened around Hans' gun hand and Butch gave a slight twist. Bones cracked and Hans howled in agony. Butch pushed him against the wall, poised a fist and slugged him.

"And that," Butch said, "is that. Now I got to get Freytag and put him back to bed before the fresh air wakes him up. I tucked him under one of the trees in back."

Butch disappeared out the front door. Silk disarmed both spies and gave Quinn a questioning look.

"What can we do with these two now, sir? They'll yell their heads off about Freytag if we toe's, them over to the F.B.I."

"I know. They must be silenced. Some way that will make them hold their tongue voluntarily. There must be a way—a quick one, too."

Butch came in, carrying Freytag. The treacherous spy was sleeping heavily. Butch carried him upstairs. Quinn sat down, forehead wrinkled. Then he smiled a little.

"Silk, I may have it. These two men are active spies, They know what happened to others convicted of treasonable acts against this country. If they are arrested on another charge, they'll take their medicine without talking—accept a lesser rap than they'd get as spies. That's it."

Silk groaned. "But how can we work it?"

Carol walked softly up the hallway. "I can help," she said. "While we were listening to those men threaten you, the same idea entered my mind. To dispose of them some way without resorting to their method—murder. These diamonds in my purse. We could plant a few on them, have the police come—"

"Just the thing!" Quinn cried. "Silk, when Butch comes down, have him carry these men to the Forsythe house, two doors up the street. They are away for a few weeks. The house is empty and it's equipped with burglar alarms connected with a private detective agency. Frame this pair as burglars. Make it so obvious that even Captain McGrath will have no questions. You can figure out a way."

Silk waited for Butch, told him to pick up the heavier man and follow. Silk led the way to the Forsythe house, examined a rear window and saw the burglar alarm. He carefully cut the window with one of the diamonds Carol had given him, pressed out a circular piece and reached in to neutralize the alarm system.

Then he raised the window, climbed through and Butch passed the spy inside. Silk laid him down and while Butch returned for the second man, Silk went through the house. He looted drawers in an upstairs bedroom, taking care not to leave any fingerprints. He found a tin box containing some moderately priced jewelry, brought this down and pressed the big spy's fingers all over the box. Then he jimmied it open with a heavy kitchen knife and spilled the contents into Hans' pockets.

Silk threw the empty box on the floor of the upstairs room, dropped the knife in the hallway, and hurried down in time to meet Butch and take the smaller spy through the window. Butch entered also.

"Go down the cellar," Silk said. "Look for the liquor. Open a few bottles and dump part of their contents down the sink. Flush it away—be sure of that. Then bring a couple of bottles up here." Butch returned in five minutes, grinning.

"We ought to be friends with Forsythe," he said. "Busted my heart to dump this stuff down the cellar sink, but I did. Now what?"

SILK wiped the bottles clean of fingerprints, pressed the smaller spy's fingers on one and Hans'

(Facing page:) Quinn swept the crooked end of the cane toward the feet of Hans, the big spy, who tripped on it.

on the other. He poured a generous quantity of liquor down the throats of the men and replaced the guns, with only their owner's prints on them. Half a dozen diamonds went into the pockets of both men.

"That setup," he said as he surveyed his work, "would frame a saint. Beat it, Butch. I'm going to set off the alarm system."

Butch went through the window, but Silk called him back.

"Wait a minute. This has to be perfect; get a rock from the driveway border. Smash the window so it will look as though they entered this way and the alarm system didn't go off. Then I'll open the front door and leave it ajar a bit."

Two minutes later, Silk was galloping back toward Quinn's house. He caught up with Butch and laughed in high glee. "When those two babies wake up," he said, "they'll find themselves handcuffed and accused of breaking and entering. The cops will figure they got drunk, had a fight, and both passed out. During the scrap, the alarm was set off. I'd like to see that pair explain their way out of this."

"So would I," Butch grinned.

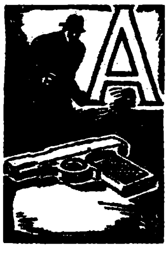
"Butch," Quinn told the big man when the two returned to the Quinn home, "that was excellent thinking on your part—to represent yourself as Freytag after you heard that pair admit they didn't know him by sight."

Butch pointed at Carol. "Give her the credit, Boss. She heard them Nazis talking and thought up what to do."

"Anyway, thanks to both of you," Quinn said. We're in a rather tough spot right now. Of course, those two spies will be arrested—I've already heard police sirens, so they're probably handcuffed already. They'll be charged with breaking and entering and while they will know darned well it's a frame-up. What can they do about it? Take a three or four year prison sentence as crooks, or admit they are spies and get fifteen years! No, we're safe from that pair, but not from the man who sent them. He knows Freytag is here. He won't give up with one failure."

"I'll stick around," Butch declared. "All I wish is this Dr. Mars shows. Boy, wouldn't I like to bust him one!"

CHAPTER XII
The Black Bat Accused



AT BREAKFAST the following morning, Freytag sniffled and coughed incessantly.

"I do not understand it," he said. "I had no cold when I went to bed last night. Anyone would think I'd slept in a barn. More blankets, perhaps. Yes—you, there—put another blanket on my bed tonight."

For a moment Quinn was afraid Freytag might get the contents of a coffee pot right down his neck. But Silk merely inclined his head, not daring to answer.

"Freytag," Quinn said. "I wouldn't go riding if I were you. In fact, wouldn't even set foot outside of the house. You know what happened yesterday and if there'd been a slip, you might have taken your first step toward the electric chair."

Freytag threw down his fork, "If you mention that again, I will—I will do something drastic! It makes no difference to me whether or not you are blind. No member of the New Order permits those he has conquered to dictate limits or even make suggestions."

Quinn folded his napkin. His face was impassive.

"You're a pretty good example of the Nazi Order, Freytag. Arrogant, thoughtless and dumb. Yes, dumb. A coward to boot. You can't stand the slightest mention of the electric chair. Yet you can go about the world killing and maiming, bringing sorrow and heartache wherever you go. Death—destruction—hate. You were born to be purple, all right, Freytag—the purple of mourning and sadness."

With a yowl of anger, Freytag pushed his chair back and advanced on Quinn with doubed fists. Silk balanced the coffee pot. Quinn just sat there until Freytag was bending over him.

"Go back and sit down, Freytag," he said calmly. "You wouldn't dare harm me because without me, you'd be lost. You can't return to your murder mob because they know you have turned traitor. You'll be picked up by the police soon and questioned. You won't be able to answer properly and they'll find out who and what you are. Sit down, I said."

Freytag turned pale. His hands shook, his eyes were slitted and hate-filled, but he knew that Quinn was right. Slowly he returned to his chair.

"From now on, behave yourself," Quinn said, "because I'll take no more abuse. You don't happen to be Heaven's gift to the Earth, Nazi. Arrogance gets you nowhere in this house nor in this land. Germans are just Germens here, not the superior race."

"We are the superior race!" Freytag challenged.

Quinn arose, picked up his cane and walked a few paces before he turned around. Silk had never seen his face quite so stern.

"Freytag," he said slowly, "some people believe that Hitler led the Germans into this slaughter. They're wrong. I'll grant there are good Germans and bad Germans, but those who remain in the Fatherland aren't fit to be elsewhere. Why are you called a Hun? Is that name something to be proudly worn? No! It means murder and more murder.

Pillage and more pillage. Agony, distress and spilled blood. The German people were merely led by Hitler into reverting to the savages they are."

Freytag was white with rage, but he said nothing.

Quinn sighed. "Well, I've got that off my chest and we know just how we stand, Freytag. You're in one of those famous pincer movements—between your own spies and our law forces, I can squeeze you any time I choose. Silk, please get my coat and things. I here at appointment at the office."

As Quinn tapped his way to the door, he turned once more and looked in the general direction of the spy.

"You'll be here when I return, Freytag. You'll tell me about the third spy so I can inform the F.B.I. Last night's information was correct. Read the papers. They mention a raid on the Justice Storage Company."

At the door, Silk dropped his voice to a whisper. "Can I clout him just once, sir?"

"Not now. Unfortunately, he's as necessary to us as we are to him. Later, with luck, we'll all clout him. And Silk, there won't be any trouble from Freytag from now on."

Freytag watched from a window as Silk drove the limousine up to the gate, then helped Tony Quinn make his way to it. As they drove off, Freytag sat down heavily and sulked.

But if he had kept looking out that window another minute or two, he would have seen Captain McGrath move from behind a tree across the street and walk rapidly toward the house.

The door buzzer sounded and Freytag jumped up, his face suddenly ashen. That might be Dr. Mars or one of his representatives. Freytag knew he had been tempting fate. He had driven through a section of the city noted as a stronghold of the bunds and Hitler sympathizers. Perhaps more of those people knew him than he realized.

Freytag let the buzzer sound and just stood there. Then there was a sharp tap on the window behind him and he spun around. He breathed easier when he saw Captain McGrath's face pressed against the window. Freytag let him in.

"I am sorry not to have answered the door more promptly," Freytag explained. "But it is only a bother to tell callers that Quinn and his servant are not here."

"Oh, that's okay." McGrath sat down and lit a black cigar, a brand he swore by.

"But I told you, Quinn has gone to his office." Freytag was beginning to get a little worried.

He knew McGrath's roughshod methods from his recent experience at Headquarters.

"I didn't come to see Quinn." McGrath rolled the cigar between his lips and smiled. "I came to see you, Freytag—how did you get wise to him?"

Freytag gave a nervous start. "I do not understand."

"Oh, stop stalling. Quinn lets you drive his car, lets you live in his house. He took more abuse from you in my office than I've ever seen him take before. He did something else that's peculiar—got the Commissioner to let you go free on that speeding charge."

"But he is my—friend?" Freytag wondered what was coming next. Was this police captain looking for graft?

"Friend, my eye. After the way you ordered him around? You've got something on him, Freytag. You've found out he's the Black Bat."

Freytag frowned. "The Black Bat? I still don't understand."

"You will." McGrath raised his voice almost to a shout. "He's the Black Bat and if you shield him, you're an accessory to the crimes he commits! Get that through your thick skull and start talking!"

"But this is fantastic. What is the Black Bat? The name means nothing to me."

"The Black Bat goes around with a hood over his face. Some people are scared stiff by him, but not me. He acts like an independent detective, only he doesn't obey the law. If somebody gets tough, that guy dies awfully fast. He's handy with a gun and with his fists, too. He's smart, but he's also a crook and that means I've a sworn duty to arrest him,"

Freytag threw up his hands. "It is impossible. Quinn is stone blind. How could he be a detective—handy with a gun? I'm afraid you have made a grave mistake, Captain."

McGRATH ground out his cigar in an ash tray and arose. "All right. You won't talk, and I know why. It could spoil your hold on him. Just keep this in mind, though. I'll get him and when I do, you'll go along as an accessory."

McGrath stamped out and as Freytag watched him disappear a sly smile touched his lips. One minute later he was searching the house, room by room, careful to replace things exactly as they were, but examining every bit of paper he found.

"The Black Bat!" he muttered. "A crook wanted by the police. I thought that blind man was a bit too clever. Now we shall see who is boss here. All I have to do now is to find evidence enough."

Freytag's cunning mind was already making plans to use this knowledge against Quinn.

MEANWHILE Quinn was in his law offices downtown with Ted Landis and Commissioner Warner.

"I've checked up on the law pertaining to commission men," Quinn said. "It isn't too clear and of

course war conditions change everything. I'm afraid, Mr. Landis, that even though you may be fair and honest, you're in the same category with those others who profit hugely by getting contracts for defense industries."

Landis groaned. "I was afraid of that. Well, at least you helped me make up my mind. I'm quitting now, to accept an offer from the management of a firm that manufactures vital precision instruments for planes and tanks. Name your fee, Mr. Quinn."

"There's no fee," Quinn laughed. "Any friend of Commissioner Warner is welcome to what little I can do. By the way, Commissioner, I had an odd visitor yesterday. Wouldn't give his name, and of course I can't describe him. But he did tell me I was in danger. From one of your policemen. Imagine that!"

Warner gave Landis a quizzical glance before he spoke.

"Captain McGrath again. You see, Landis, I have a detective captain who is suspicious that Tony, here, isn't blind."

"Tell him the rest," Quinn grinned. "Or rather, I'll tell him. McGrath has the impression that I am the Black Bat. He's a good policeman, but he shouldn't be wasting his time trying to prove something that is so patently impossible."

Landis laughed, but he sobered quickly.

"I'm sorry, Quinn," he said contritely. "It did strike me funny, but I don't like laughing over someone's misfortunes. This McGrath must be a colossal dope. How in the world did he ever acquire such an idea?"

"Neither of us know." Warner chuckled. "Yesterday, however, a guest of Tony's was arrested for speeding. Tony went down to get him out and the young man must have been rather hot under the collar because he said a few things no guest ever should. So McGrath is convinced that Tony Quinn took this abuse because his guest had something on him—the fact that he was the Black Bat."

Landis arose. "Well, we could use a few dozen Black Bats these days. Policemen and G-men have their hands full and must adhere to legal red tape. I've heard the Black Bat doesn't bother much with niceties imposed by the law. He's a direct man, and direct methods should be most useful fighting the elements that try to unseat Democracy. Thank you for your advice, Mr. Quinn. Coming, Commissioner?"

"If McGrath gets too gay, I'll spike his guns," Warner said to Quinn. "Just let me know."

WHEN they were gone, Quinn's lips compressed tightly. Silk emerged from the anteroom with a worried look around his eyes.

"I respect Commissioner Warner and all that," Silk said, "but I think that maybe he talked a little too much that time."

"He did," Quinn said tightly, "and I couldn't do anything but carry the ball. Landis may be quite all right—but how can we be sure? There is still our Dr. Mars to watch out for. Now Landis knows Freytag is staying at the house. Forthcoming events will indicate whether or not to suspect him. But we must be strictly on guard."

"Yes, sir," Silk said. "Against McGrath, too. He's getting rambunctious. Fun is fun, but McGrath is entirely too serious."

CHAPTER XIII
Spiked Brandy

FREYTAG was playing solitaire when Quinn and Silk returned home. He watched Quinn intently as he tapped his way to the chair in front of the fireplace.

"Freytag," Quinn said curtly, "come closer to me. Sit down there. Anything happen while I was away? Phone calls, visitors?"

"Nobody ever comes here," Freytag said sullenly. "It is like a morgue."

"I see."

Quinn fumbled on the table for his pipe. For just a fraction of a second his hand froze. He saw one of McGrath's black, heavy cigars crushed in the ash tray. Freytag was lying. He had talked to McGrath, which meant Freytag now probably shared McGrath's suspicions that Tony Quinn was the Black Bat.

Freytag immediately proved that beyond question. He drew a knife from his pocket, opened the blade carefully so there was no sound. Giving a quick look to make sure Silk was nowhere about, Freytag slowly moved the point of the blade straight toward Quinn's right eye. Freytag had a snarl on his face and if a man ever looked as though he meant to drive the knife right through the eye socket, Freytag did then.

Quinn never turned a hair. He continued to fill his pipe. In fact, when he zipped the tobacco pouch closed, he leaned forward deliberately until Freytag hastily pulled the blade away for fear Quinn would come into contact with it.

Freytag closed the knife and put it away. He looked puzzled now. No matter how brave a man was, he couldn't possibly face such a thing as Quinn had. Not without showing some emotion—the flick of the eyelid, a twitching mouth or an involuntary hand movement. Quinn had displayed none of this and Freytag's doubts mounted.

It was beyond his comprehension that men may

possess rare courage in the face of all danger. Freytag's trouble lay in comparing Quinn with the Nazis he knew, men who show initiative and daring when the odds are all in their favor, but collapse like pricked balloons when the tide turns against them.

"You—er—wanted me for something?" Freytag asked.

"Yes. Usually you refuse to tell me of impending events until after dinner. You will talk now, Freytag, because I want to notify the F.B.I. promptly. Last night they were almost too late."

"I must have time to think," Freytag said curtly.

"You've had all day and I'm sick of catering to you. Talk, Freytag, or I'll take steps to see that you're placed under arrest. You're no better than those other trained murderers. Just because you turned yellow doesn't put a halo around your head."

"Very well," Freytag growled. "It makes no difference anyway. Tonight is Eugen Schinkel's turn. He was especially trained in the art of assassination. Schinkel has a list of prominent men, vital to your war efforts. Tonight he details men and gives them instructions so that by tomorrow those people on the list will be dead."

"How does he make contact?" Quinn demanded. "I want all details, just as you gave them to me in connection with Daimler and Gauss."

FREYTAG looked around apprehensively and talked in a low voice. Quinn felt prickles of excitement creep up his spine. This was the most ambitious movement Nazi spies had undertaken so far—deadly too. The chances of its success were excellent.

"If Schinkel is taken care of, there is only one more left—besides you," Quinn said. "What's that man's specialty? In what fine art did the *Ruckwanderer* school train him?"

"Fritz Brehm is our *Oberleutnant.* If Schinkel fails, it is to be my turn. When I do not show up, Fritz will know and act. You must protect me, do you hear? Fritz is the most dangerous of us all."

Quinn got up. "You may have to eat dinner alone, Freyteg. I'm going to take a walk."

Freytag's eyes became suspicious again, but he stayed seated. Silk helped Quinn on with his coat, held the door open and warned him about the steps. Quinn tapped his way down them, opened the gate and turned south. Reaching the corner, he proceeded down the quiet street that ran beside the wall of his property.

Freytag couldn't see him, not even from an upper window. Quinn walked precisely like a blind man. He'd had experience enough when he had in fact been bereft of sight, so as not to make a fumble.

At the gate he stopped, turned around and took a couple of steps back. Seeing that no one observed

SILK

him, he popped through the gate, hurried to the garden house and returned to his home by way of the tunnel.

Butch and Carol were waiting for him. Quinn paced the floor nervously.

"Freytag is wise, thanks to McGrath," he told his assistants. "Not absolutely certain, but he has ideas I'm not blind and that I am the Black Bat. Makes things difficult, because Freytag will keep his wits about him now. So you two will have to carry the ball again—at least until Freytag drinks his night-cap and passes out."

"We're ready to bust Freytag or to smash some more of those Nazi rats," Butch declared ominously. "Just tell us where to go, Boss."

"It's going to be dangerous. A man named Eugen Schinkel is our prey. He has been trained to assassinate people and he has a list—made up by the Gestapo, I suppose—of people who are to be murdered by tomorrow. Tonight, Schinkel details his men and tells them how to do their bloody work."

"We'd better get that list," Carol said. "Even if Schinkel is taken care of, someone else might try to earn an iron cross by picking off the victims listed."

"Yes," Quinn said. "Now it seems that Nazi undercover agents prepared for such events as these long ago. A private detective agency known as Gallagher's Investigation Bureau is composed of Nazi spies. Killers all. Somehow, they satisfied the police as to their integrity and I presume they have been conducting a legal detective business. But those men will be armed—with permits to carry guns. They'll have identification that can get them into protected places."

Butch whistled. "Whew! If they ever get that list, no telling what will happen! How do we nail this Schinkel, Boss?"

"Freytag says he will come out of hiding early this evening. He will go to this detective agency and outline a case—a divorce case in which the names of Brown and Kelly are to be used. He will offer to pay six hundred and fifty dollars for information that will lead to getting his divorce. The figures and names are the identification code."

"We're on our way." Carol started toward the tunnel exit.

"Wait a minute," Quinn said. "This is so important that I think I should also take a hand. Perhaps I won't be able to because of Freytag, but if worst comes to worst, I'll slug that measly roach. Butch, you and Carol see what this detective agency looks like. Stick around and watch anyone who enters. One of you phone Silk every half hour. Don't pay any attention to his answers. He'll try to convince Freytag the calls are routine queries from clients. If I don't appear before nine o'clock, or Silk doesn't show up, carry on as best you can."

AS THEY left through the tunnel, Quinn sat down, frowned, and did his best to figure some way out of this dilemma. Freytag had him right. Unless the Nazi fell into a drugged sleep, the Black Bat was helpless.

Quinn left the lab via the tunnel also, made his way to the street and walked back to the front door. Silk let him in. Freytag was eating dinner. Quinn sat down opposite him and Silk began to serve.

"You took care of the matter?" Freytag queried.

"That's what I went out for," Quinn replied. "It has to be done anonymously, otherwise a flock of F.B.I. men would descend on my home, arrest you and probably me to boot. Silk, I'm very nervous tonight. Give me a double brandy, will you?"

"I will also take a double brandy," Freytag declared.

Silk served them, after the meal was over. Freytag arose, holding his glass.

"I think I will sit on the porch for some air," he said. "Inaction stifles me. I will not be seen. It is dark tonight."

Freytag took a sip of the brandy and went out the door. Silk watched him, but Freytag just sat down on the lower step and sipped his brandy again. Silk withdrew. If Freytag spotted him, he would become suspicious instantly.

Freytag leaned back and wondered what would become of him after this was over. He had made certain plans, and when all the saboteurs were out of the way, he could wait until something happened. Like the wrecking of a train, for instance, a mystery which the F.B.I. could not solve.

Then Freytag planned to take credit with the spies in this country for perpetrating the catastrophe. He could go somewhere—even get a job. After all, life here was better than in the Reich. Good food—money—liquor. Then when Hitler's legions overran the country. Freytag could come forward with his story and be a hero.

It was all so easy for a man of his intelligence. Of course, if he could prove Tony Quinn was not blind and was the Black Bat, things would be even easier—Quinn would pay through the nose.

Suddenly, Freytag uttered a faint cry of terror and jumped. He cursed then as a small dog came up to him, wagging its tail. Freytag laughed softly. At least, he could have a little amusement. He petted the dog's head, carefully moved his hand toward the collar, then grabbed the dog in a choking grip.

He drew the animal closer, opened its mouth and poured half the brandy down its throat. He let the dog go then, yapping in alarm as it ran down the path. Nearing the gate, the dog slowed up, then stopped entirely and fell over on its side.

Freytag's eyes grew wide. He sniffed of the brandy, concentrated on trying to determine

whether or not any poison was in his stomach. He felt all right. Freytag arose and hurried to where the dog lay. He made a quick examination. The dog was just sleeping. Freytag picked it up, hid the dog behind a bush and cursed.

He was still cursing when he reached the door. But as Silk let him in, Freytag gave no indication that he knew the brandy was spiked. He walked into the study where Quinn sat. Silk followed. Freytag yawned, drained his glass and sat down. He yawned again, almost fell asleep, and finally went to his room without comment.

"Give him fifteen minutes," Quinn told Silk. "Then take a look. If he's sleeping, we'll get busy."

"Yes, sir," Silk said. "It won't take fifteen minutes, though, because I gave him an awful jolt this time."

SILK started walking away.

"Silk, come back here to me," Quinn called quietly, without a tremor in his voice. "Don't hurry. Someone just climbed over the porch railing and is tiptoeing toward the window. That means Dr. Mars or one of the other spies."

Silk walked back slowly, tense and ready to move fast if need be.

"I can see him through the window," Quinn said. "Not his face—muffled too much. There's a gun. When I say the word, turn around, pretend to see the killer, and knock me over. Land on the floor yourself, crawl to the light cord and yank it."

Silk's face became ashen white.

"Now!" Quinn said.

Silk twisted around, glanced at the window, then lunged toward Quinn's chair. He bowled it over just as a gun cracked. The window shattered and a bullet plopped into the far wall.

Silk wriggled furiously toward the lamp cord, yanked it and the room was plunged into near darkness. Only the hall light shone through and that didn't reach the end of the room where Quinn and Silk lay flat on the floor.

Quinn watched the window, trying to get a glimpse of the killer's face. Because it was so muffled, he reasoned this must be Dr. Mars himself, come to do his own dirty work.

CHAPTER XIV
Murder Agency

UPSTAIRS, Tony Quinn and Silk heard a howl of terror from Freytag. He didn't come down, though. Quinn's remarkable eyes saw the killer level his gun once more. He gave a savage rolling movement and swept Silk along with him.

The bullet smacked into the floor just about where Quinn had been lying. Dr. Mars had fired more by guesswork than by aiming, but he had guessed well. After all, a blind man wouldn't be expected to move about so fast.

They heard the killer run down the porch steps. Then Quinn's highly sensitive ears detected the sound of a car motor. He arose. Silk plugged the lamp in and helped Quinn to his feet. He picked up the cane and Quinn was standing in the center of the room when Freytag's frightened face peered around the corner from the hallway.

"Wh-what happened?" Freytag asked nervously.

Quinn turned in the general direction of the door.

"Freytag, I warned you it would be dangerous to leave the house, but like the dumb creature you are, you paid no attention. Someone trailed you here. Someone knows you are giving me information. Those bullets were meant to kill me and if the murderer had succeeded, he would have entered and taken care of you."

Freytag fell into a chair. He kept wetting his lips as if he wanted to say something, but didn't know just what. Finally, he arose and walked away, staggering a bit as he neared the door. Silk went over and helped him upstairs.

When Silk returned, he said:

"Freytag is out like a light, sir. We'd better get going. I'll draw the heavy drapes over the window and no one will notice it's broken."

"I don't believe the shots were heard, either. I ... Silk, we're having another visitor, the front gate just opened."

Silk made a dive toward a desk, yanked open a drawer, and transferred an automatic to his side pocket. He curled a finger around the trigger and was prepared to shoot instantly as he opened the door in answer to the buzzer.

Andre Udall stood there, smiling and bowing. Silk let him in, led him to where Quinn was seated.

"You remember me?" Udall said. "But no—how could you when you cannot see? I am the man who warned you about Captain McGrath. Now do you recall?"

"Yes—of course I do. Has anything else developed?"

"Indeed, Mr. Quinn, you cannot realize how much I hate this man McGrath. The way he treated me you'd think he was a Nazi and had me in a concentration camp. He is after you. If I prevent him from accomplishing what he is after, I will be partly revenged."

"You told me all that before," Quinn said.

"Yes, I know. Well, I have been watching McGrath. This afternoon he hid behind a tree across the street until you and your servant left the house. Then he came over and your guest let him in."

"How did you know I have a guest?" Quinn snapped.

"I overheard certain things while I sat in the office which adjoins McGrath's. The name of your guess is Freytag. He let McGrath in and they were together for quite some time. It may mean something, and I thought you should know."

"Thank you," Quinn told him. "But please understand that McGrath can do nothing to me. He needs evidence and an innocent man doesn't become involved. Perhaps he did question my guest, but—"

"Why don't you call Freytag and ask him?" Udall suggested.

"Because Freytag isn't here. I don't expect him back until after midnight. You mean well, but your suspicions are just a bit overdrawn. Good night."

UDALL did not seem offended. He trotted ahead of Silk, smiled and bowed as he went out. Silk watched him hurry up the street.

"If he is Dr. Mars, sir," he grumbled when he returned to the library. "He certainly has nerve to come back here two minutes after he tried to murder us. I think he came back to see if he'd done the job."

"That might be so," Quinn said, "except that Udall strikes me as being rather stupid. I'm much more concerned about Ted Landis. I don't like the way Landis showed up so opportunely and with an excuse that could be flimsy if I took the trouble to investigate. Landis is clever, Silk. Smooth, brainy. He'd be a tough man to battle, and I believe Dr. Mars is tough. Now we've got to get started. No telling what Carol and Butch have uncovered."

It was only about an hour before that when Carol had entered the five-story business building where the private detective agency was housed. She waited on the second floor stairway until Butch appeared, then they proceeded to the fourth floor.

"Our job," Carol said, "is to watch how many enter and remember what they look like. If they get their meeting over quickly and leave, then we must trail them or, if possible, stop them."

"That's me," Butch declared, "Butch, the Stopper. I hope I get a crack at them."

The main entrance to the detective agency was illuminated. Carol looked for somewhere to hide and spotted a freight elevator shaft at the far end of the hall. She hurried over to it, pressed the button, hoping it would be a self-operated lift.

It was. She and Butch entered, closed the door all but about an inch, and jammed it open with a wad of paper. If anyone signaled for the lift on another floor, it could not respond and they had an excellent spot from which to keep an eye on the private detective agency offices.

Butch extinguished the light in the elevator by loosening the bulb. Neither spoke; just peered intently down the hall.

A man appeared, stopped in front of the office and took keys out of his pocket. He unlocked the door, stepped in and slammed it shut. Five minutes later another came. In the next hour they counted eight men, all of whom were provided with keys.

"I'll bet they have badges and guns," Carol whispered. "Imagine it, Butch. They actually work as detectives, and are spies. Takes a Nazi mind to cook up something as cunning as that."

"Shh!" Butch warned, "Here comes another."

Carol suddenly gripped Butch's arm. "Look closer. That's Silk, wearing a disguise! Remember how he can make himself look like a banker oozing with money?"

Carol opened the elevator door a little more and made a low sound to attract Silk's attention. Silk indicated that he heard and kept walking until he was close to the elevator. He took a quick look over his shoulder and stepped inside.

"How many?" he asked.

"Eight," Carol replied. "And we have good descriptions of them. As each one unlocked the office door, the light shone right on his face."

"The most dangerous is about my height," Silk said. "Slender and dapper looking. He has a small mustache—waxed, according to Freytag. Did he show up?"

"Not yet," Carol said. "If he does, what then?"

SILK took a look down the hall.

"The Black Bat is in the building. We're waiting until all of the spies assemble, then the F.B.I. can take over. But Schinkel, the dapper guy, must not be permitted to get in touch with the others. Our main job is to get him and the list of victims he carries. That will be your pleasure, Butch. You and Carol slip out of here now, go downstairs and one of you remain in the lobby. You, Butch, because the lobby will be deserted at this hour and when Schinkel walks in, you can grab him without making a fuss."

"I'll stay outside and keep watch for him," Carol said. "Come on, Butch. This time I think you'll get your chance to crack a skull."

They moved silently past the detective agency-spy headquarters, used the stairs to reach the lobby and Silk remained in the elevator to keep watch. Not two minutes later, Silk saw a shadowy figure move down the hall so fast and silently that it might have been a gigantic bird in flight.

The Bat slipped into the elevator.

"It's working nicely," he told Silk. "I came in through a rear entrance. Carol and Butch are planted by now. All spies who show up will be allowed to

come through except Schinkel, and Butch will take care of him. When we're certain they are all here, we'll notify the F.B.I. and keep guard until the rats are all taken."

"It's working too smoothly," Silk muttered. "I'm worried, sir. First, there's Freytag who thinks he knows who the Black Bat is. Then McGrath is on the warpath. Somebody tries to gun us out and besides that, I'm scared stiff this won't happen to come off according to schedule."

"I know," the Black Bat said. "The same thing has entered my mind. Daimlcr and Gauss were taken care of and the spy branches assigned to them rounded up. Dr. Mars may be especially cautious this time, or set some kind of a trap."

"Maybe I'd better breeze into that office and pretend to be Schinkel," Silk proposed. "Stall them and see if I can find out anything."

"Too risky." The Black Bat rejected the idea. "Besides, even though we know the pass words, it isn't necessary for you to take such a chance. Those men can't get out without our knowing it—and they won't leave here. Right around the corner—Office four-twelve—I took care to open the door and make certain a phone is handy. Reynolds of the F.B.I. will be waiting for my call and he'll swing into action immediately."

"All right, if you say so," Silk said. "I hope Butch doesn't bungle this."

"Carol is watching," the Black Bat said. "Unless something unforeseen happens, they'll both be all right."

But something unforeseen was happening. Carol, posted just outside the building, saw Schinkel coming down the street. There was no mistaking him. He answered Freytag's description perfectly and he was obviously nervous.

Carol stepped toward the door and gave a covert signal. Butch drew back, just inside the door.

Schinkel turned in, walking fast. Butch just reached out, grabbed him by the neck, and drew back a fist to finish the job. But Butch never struck the blow because, at that moment, a gun was pressed against his back with convincing firmness.

BUTCH slowly let his prisoner drop. Schinkel jumped up, massaging his throat. He started to reach into his pocket.

"No, you fool," the man with the gun said, over Butch's shoulder. "Not here. Anyway, we must make him talk."

"Ja, as you say, Fritz." Schinkel nodded. "We take him away with us. Or perhaps I should go upstairs and leave him to you?"

"No—they can wait upstairs. This will not take long and we can phone them we are late. Go outside and bring the car up front. And Schinkel, get a grip on yourself. You shake like an Italian soldier advancing backward."

All Butch hoped was that Carol would not try to interfere. Chances of anyone coming into the lobby were slim. It was almost eleven o'clock.

Butch was forced to the door, and his captor walked beside him. The gun was hidden, but ready to deal out death in the fraction of a second. Butch was helpless to resist. He gave one covert look around for Carol. She was nowhere in sight.

Butch got into the car, settled back, and instantly his captor drew the gun into the open again.

"It would be well," he told Butch, "if you started to talk at once. Are you an F.B.I. man?"

Butch compressed his lips. Lying would not help, but stalling might. He knew this man must be Fritz Brehm, the leader of the five saboteurs, and the most dangerous and clever of the lot.

CHAPTER XV
Freytag's Vice

JUST as the car carrying Butch and his captors rolled away, Carol came running from a nearby doorway. She climbed into a taxi parked at the corner. The driver was about forty-five and tough-looking, which suited Carol.

"What kind of an American are you, driver?" she asked him.

The taximan twisted his head around and grinned.

"Well, my old man came from Greece and my old lady was French. I was born in Brooklyn and, lady, that makes me an A-Number-One American. Ain't that so?"

"Then prove it." Carol pointed to the disappearing car in which, Butch was a prisoner. "That car just turning the corner—there are two Nazi apses in it and they've taken prisoner a friend of mine who is after them. Don't ask questions. We might be cops or G-men. Your job is to trail that car and do it without being noticed."

The driver nodded. "You don't look like no crackpot, lady, and I ain't one to turn down a chance at them killers. Hang onto your hat!"

The trail was not difficult to follow. It first led along an express speedway, then turned off near the city limits. They traveled over a concrete road for about two miles and then the spy car disappeared. They found it again, though, being driven around the corner of a long, one-story building. An arch over the driveway indicated that this was the meeting place and picnic grounds of a German singing society.

"What'll we do now, lady?" the driver asked. "Bust in and clean 'em up?'

"We'd last about ten seconds," Carol grimaced. "I'm going into that place alone. You go back to the building where you picked me up. The five-story one in the middle of the block.

"Go to the fourth floor and walk down the hallway of the north wing. Pass an office with the name 'Gallagher Detective Agency' on the door, keep going another dozen yards, then speak in a whisper. The people in that office must not hear you."

"Oh, boy!" The driver grinned. "This is like one of them spy movies. What'll I say, lady?"

"Just call out 'Silk.' Repeat it until a man who looks like a banker answers you. Tell him what has happened. And here—the ride is worth every nickel of this twenty dollars. There'll be a couple of more like it if you deliver the message."

"Nix," the driver said. "This is on me. See you later. Save one of them monkeys for me, huh?"

After the driver disappeared, Carol moved toward the singing society hall. She had an idea the only singing that went on there these days was a wail of death. Around the back of the building, she found that the spy car had rolled into a basement garage and that the doors were securely locked.

Seeing she couldn't get in that way, Carol returned to the front of the place and eyed several windows. They were tempting, but the men inside would be bound to spot her. Then she saw a small side door and fumbled in her purse for keys which Tony Quinn had provided. They would open any average door.

The third key Carol tried turned back the bolt. She opened the door a crack and listened. She heard angry voices, then Butch's bellow. They were working on him already. Under cover of the rackets she slipped inside, closed the door and tiptoed across a spacious meeting hall.

At the front end were two windows through which enough moonlight streamed, showing her the way was clear. All chairs were folded and stacked against the walls. She headed for a room behind this large hall, flattened against the wall and sidestepped until she could risk a quick look inside.

BUTCH was hung by the hands from a rafter. He was stripped to the waist and Schinkel was using a heavy belt on him, so that the buckle inflicted deep cuts in Butch's flesh.

If Butch had been free, Carol might have diverted the attention of the spies until he could swing into action, but now the situation called for something else.

Hurrying away silently, a two-minute search showed a phone booth in what seemed to be a hat-check room. Carol stepped into the booth and closed the door.

The hinges emitted a dismal, bloodcurdling squeal that could have been heard through the

BUTCH

racket of a swing band. She raised the receiver, dropped a coin in the slot and tried to dial before the spies would be after her. It was too late. Fritz had heard, and was already charging across the room, gun in hand. He aimed it through the glass door, gesturing for her to come out.

Carol dropped the receiver, opened the door and emerged with her hands high. Fritz watched her narrowly, replaced the receiver, then stepped close. "Well," he said, "since when has the F.B.I. been hiring pretty women? Come out, you. I'm not fooled. I saw you outside the building in town. I saw you move away after Schinkel went into the lobby. You and this hulking beast we have in there know one another. Now he'll talk, because I know Americans. They can take plenty of punishment until they see a woman being hurt. Then they talk fast."

Carol walked ahead of him, into the lighted room. Butch groaned dismally. Fritz Brehm laughed.

"We have another one, Eugen," he told the dapper-looking saboteur. "It would be too bad to damage a face as pretty as hers. Work on the big man a little longer. I will have a talk with the girl. I do not think she came with anyone else or a raid would have started by now."

Carol shrank back as Brehm approached her. This man was without mercy, without pity. And to make matters even worse, neither Silk nor the Black Bat could have any idea as to what had happened! Her sole chance lay in the taxi driver.

At just about that time, Carol's taxi driver was parking in front of the building where the phony detective agency had offices. He hurried inside. He reached the fourth floor landing, then stopped suddenly. Karl Freytag—though he had no way of guessing who the man was—was there, peering around the doorway to look down the corridor. Freytag whirled around.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I'm looking for a guy named Silk," the taxi driver said. "That's a funny name, but it's the McCoy."

"I'm Silk. Who sent you? What is it?" Freytag was thinking fast. He knew what had happened outside.

"Well, I got to be sure," the driver insisted. "If you're Silk, you know what a certain girl looks like—"

Freytag didn't know who the driver was talking about, but he took a long shot and hit it on the nose.

"She is pretty. Exceptionally so. At least, I think so."

"She sure is," the driver said. "Okay, you must be the guy. The girl is watching some spies at a German singing society and—"

FREYTAG'S right fist suddenly came up in a well-aimed blow. It hit the driver on the point of the jaw and he flew backward, almost toppling down the steps. Freytag grabbed him, lowered him to the floor, then ran madly downstairs.

Whoever this girl was, she must be one of the Black Bat's aides. Freytag was now certain the Black Bat was in action and that meant Tony Quinn could not possibly be at home. Freytag had concocted a shrewd plan, one that could not fail, and soon now he would have Tony Quinn where he wanted him.

Freytag rushed down the street, entered a drugstore and went directly to a phone booth. He dialed the operator and asked for Police Headquarters. In a moment he was connected with Captain McGrath.

"This is a friend." Freytag tried to disguise his voice. "Don't ask questions, but the Black Bat is now busily at work. You believe he is a certain person—and that person cannot be in two places at once. Do you get what I mean?"

McGrath didn't even answer; he just banged the receiver, grabbed his hat and fled.

Silk and the Black Bat were still hidden in the elevator. No one else had appeared and the Black Bat was more and more worried about Butch and Carol.

"Something has gone wrong," he said. "Schinkel should have been here long ago. We can't wait. Go to the phone in that office I described. Call Reynolds and tell him he can find a nest of spies here. Then we'll wait long enough to give Reynolds a chance to get going."

Silk slipped out of the elevator and reached the office with the unlocked door. As he grasped the knob, he heard a groan. He stiffened. The groan came again. He went back to the corner, signaled the Black Bat, then hurried to answer those cries.

Silk was raising the taxi driver when the Black Bat arrived. The driver started to open his eyes, and the Black Bat hastily withdrew.

"What happened?" Silk asked the driver. "Who are you?"

The taxi driver's senses oriented themselves. He looked at Silk's clothing and his eyes widened.

"I made a mistake. I told another guy what the girl said I was to tell you. I forgot that the guy I was supposed to meet looked like a banker. Is your name Silk?"

"Yes. The girl—where is she? Who was the man you mistook for me?"

"The girl and me followed a couple of spies. She's at a German singing society place just off the main road to Brewster. Two miles from the speedway. The guy I met here was a tough-looking bozo. Face was all creased, but he was young. Had on a black suit—"

"Thanks," Silk said. "You'd better beat it, pal. I've taken your hack badge number and you'll find something in the mail pretty soon. Scram—before the shooting starts."

The driver hurried down the staircase. Silk walked over to the Black Bat.

"Carol is in danger, which means Butch has been snatched, too. Also, Freytag is playing some kind of a game. I don't get it, sir. Do you?"

"I'm afraid I do," the Black Bat said. "Phone Reynolds, hurry back to the house and remove that disguise. I may need you to guard Freytag. Move fast, Silk."

"But Carol and Butch—"

"Silk," the Black Bat said earnestly, "our whole future is at stake. Also the lives of many important men. We'll have to trust that Carol and Butch can stall those enemy agents. At this stage of the game we must take chances."

CHAPTER XVI
Nazi Treachery

WHEN the Black Bat slipped out of the building, he removed his cape and hood and put on the soft, broad-brimmed hat. He reached his car without attracting any attention and drove straight back to the house.

As he turned the corner, he saw Captain McGrath's car parked in front of the house. His hunch about what Freytag might do was taking shape, and it was in an ominous, dreadful form, because everything might fold up now and leave Carol and Butch out in the cold.

The Black Bat left the car on the side street, slipped through the yard and risked a quick look through the study window. McGrath was seated, while Freytag seemed to be arguing with him. Of all rooms they had to choose the study, the only way the Black Bat could get into any other part of the house without being seen.

He eyed a tree that grew close to the house. By climbing it, he might possibly reach a bedroom window. Then the Black Bat saw something else—a knotted rope made of bedsheets. It hung from the window of his own room.

The Black Bat seized the rope and hauled himself up quickly. Inside his room, he peeled off his black clothing, donned tweed trousers and a smoking jacket. He found a cane in the closet and began tapping his way across the floor.

As he descended the steps, with the caution of a blind man, he heard Freytag speaking.

"There, Captain. You did not believe me. Of course, Mr. Quinn is at home. His servant has the night off, but Mr. Quinn has not left the house all night."

McGrath's jaw dropped as Quinn walked into the study. Freytag had a triumphant look on his face.

"McGrath?" Quinn said angrily. "What are you doing here at this time of night? Oh, I heard your voice and I could recognize it a mile away. Now see here, Captain, I've had about enough of this nonsense. I'm not the Black Bat, and I hope you're satisfied this time."

"Somebody," McGrath growled, "was ribbing me. I got a call saying the Black Bat was in action so I figured if he was out, you'd be out, too. Maybe I been fooled all around. Freytag wouldn't let me search the place. He stalled me for half an hour. Maybe you got in some other way, Quinn. I'm not licked yet!"

"You'll be reported to the commissioner if you don't get out of here at once," Quinn snapped.

Out of the corner of his eye, Quinn noticed that Freytag had slipped away, and he heard him climbing the steps to the second floor.

"All right." McGrath fumbled with his hat. "But there's something going on and I mean to find out just what."

He jammed on his hat, marched to the front door and went out. Quinn put a hand to his forehead. Carol and Butch were in danger. He had to reach them quickly, but Freytag was blocking his way now. Freytag must have been suspicious of his nightcap, for he hadn't been drugged. He probably had gone to the building where the detective agency had its offices and waited there. Perhaps he had seen the Black Bat, and had set his trap with McGrath.

QUINN knew then that Freytag must be eliminated. The man's suspicions were at a white hot pitch. The showdown was here.

He heard Freytag coming down the steps. His blank eyes were turned toward the door. Quinn gasped. The blindness left him.

A man wearing black clothes, a hood and the cape of the Black Bat walked into the room. The man laughed harshly. It was Freytag.

"So you are not blind, Quinn. You are the Black Bat wanted by the police. Now I don't think you will throw me out after all those saboteurs are captured. I'm sure you won't. Yes, I sent for McGrath, I dropped the bed sheet rope from the window so you could get in without McGrath's knowing it."

Freytag yanked off the hood and hurled it into a chair.

"Silly trappings," he laughed. "In Germany, you wouldn't last ten minutes. But now that I know who you are—what will you do about it?"

Quinn moved forward slowly and Freytag had a feeling that all was not so well. His right hand darted to a hip pocket for his gun. He saw those eyes that he had thought were blank and dead flash into life. He saw something else flash, too—a fist. It hit him with scientific precision. Freytag's feet left the floor and he went backward like a rotten tree falling over.

CAROL

Quinn removed the cape, twisted Freytag's arms behind him and tied them firmly. He also tied the Nazi's legs, then picked him up bodily and dropped him on a divan.

This done, Quinn entered the lab through the secret door, got another set of regalia from a locker and tucked this under his coat. He left through the tunnel and soon was driving the coupe as fast as he dared along the express highway.

Whatever problem Freytag presented would have to be settled later. Right now, Carol and Butch needed help. Quinn grimaced. He had never before felt like killing a man deliberately, but Freytag was obnoxious, dangerous. The world would be better off without him. Quinn tried to puzzle out the identity of Dr. Mars. That spy leader was crafty enough not to show himself often, and then only under the most auspicious circumstances. Andre Udall might be Dr. Mars. Certainly the man trotted around enough. He was an alien, had been mixed up in the sale of plundered diamonds. The only thing in his favor was his apparent stupidity.

Ted Landis was different. Smart, quick, polished as a diplomat. He had worked his way into Quinn's confidence—or thought he had anyway. Furthermore, Landis was in an excellent position to do a great deal of harm. As a defense commission agent he would know where important supplies came from, where bottlenecks existed, and how the entire production program could be made to lag.

Nothing that either man had done, however, was quite enough to convict him as a spy leader. There was a good chance that someone Quinn had never laid eyes on nor heard of was Dr. Mars.

The Black Bat turned off the express highway and checked the odometer. He proceeded along the narrow concrete road until he spotted the German singing society hall.

With the car well hidden, the Black Bat moved toward the building. He threw himself flat when a car motor started up behind the place. A big car slowly pulled around the corner. Its headlights blinded the Black Bat for moment, then it passed by. The Black Bat was certain the man behind the wheel was alone in the car, which meant Carol and Butch were still in the building.

YET the driver had been just a shadow to the Black Bat. The headlights had temporarily robbed him of his abnormally acute vision. The car slowed at the road and turned. The Black Bat got a glimpse of the rear marker plate and memorized the numbers.

Then he concentrated on the building. There was activity in the cellar because the lights were still burning after the car had driven off. The Black Bat caught the whir of a starter and he dropped again, but no car rolled out.

He ran lightly around the side of the building, reaching the door which Carol had opened. His

hand was on the knob when he paused. Carol's master keys were still in the lock.

The Black Bat turned the knob firmly so it wouldn't squeak. He got the door open a crack and looked into the huge, darkened meeting and dance hall.

He stepped inside, closed the door behind him and locked it. Dropping Carol's keys into his pocket, he moved forward on rubber-shod feet. He was half-way across the wide floor when a door directly opposite opened unexpectedly.

The Black Bat ducked low. Two men came through the door, closed it behind them and started walking toward a rear room. The Black Bat, stepping softly, moved after them.

His sensitive ears caught the low hum of a motor. It seemed to come from below, but there was no time to investigate this now. He recognized both men from descriptions which Freytag had provided. Fritz Brehm, the larger of the pair, had a set, scowling face. Schinkel was dapper, probably fast on the draw, but without the tenacity of his leader. Brehm had been chosen well for the job in hand.

The Black Bat eased his two automatics out of their holsters. He stood erect, depending on the darkened meeting hall to shield him.

"Brehm—Schinkel!" he called loudly. "Turn around and raise your hands!"

Fritz Brehm turned first. He spun around, in fact, and a gun was in his hand. He fired and the bullet whipped past the Black Bat's ear. Schinkel dived head first behind the folded chairs leaning against the wall.

Brehm ducked, too, firing one more bullet that also came dangerously close. The Black Bat did not pull a trigger. He wanted these men alive, if possible. Only they knew where Carol and Butch were being held.

Schinkel fired between chairs. The slug burned against the Black Bat's forehead this time. Then he was suddenly aware that he was an excellent target in the moonlight that drifted through two windows directly behind him.

The Black Bat moved fast then. So fast that Schinkel became rattled and fired another shot that missed by yards. The Black Bat settled back against one wall where the darkness was best. He could still be seen if he moved and the spot was highly dangerous.

Reaching into his pocket he drew out Carol's keys and threw them a dozen yards away. Instantly, two guns flamed. Both spies were behind the chairs and could move from place to place without being seen. Or so they thought. The Black Bat's uncanny vision could penetrate the gloom as though it were daylight. He could even see the type of guns they were using and more than once, his trigger finger itched.

"Brehm," he called out. "Schinkel! You haven't a chance. Both of you are using revolvers which hold six shots apiece. Already, you've fired three and have only three left each. When those are gone, I'm going to break your necks!"

CHAPTER XVII
Battle in Darkness

ON THE instant, Brehm fired at the origin of the voice. He did not realize that the Black Bat had moved several feet away from the spot.

"Four for you, Brehm!" the Black Bat called out. "It's your turn how, Schinkel! Let's see how good you are."

The Black Bat suddenly went catapulting across the wide hall, plainly revealed in the moonlight. Schinkel fired twice in rapid succession, but the Black Bat kept on moving, His dark form, the flowing cape, all made rather an elusive target.

"You fool!" Brehm shouted to Shinkel. "He wanted you to shoot. Now you have only one bullet left. You know what happens if he catches you."

"Freytag knows, too," the Black Bat called out. "He knows exactly how it would feel to be electrocuted. That's what's coming to you, Schinkel. Want another pot-shot at me?"

The Black Bat saw Brehm's gun thrust between two chairs. He drew in a quick breath and leaped. Brehm fired. Splinters of wood hit the back of the Black Bat's neck. That one had been a little too close.

"One left for you, Brehm. One for you, Schinkel. When they're gone, both of you will die!"

'"Do not shoot again until you are sure," Brehm called to Schinkel. "Save that bullet."

"That's good advice," the Black Bat taunted. "But suppose I start moving right up toward you? Then what? Will you wait until it's too late? I have two guns, each has nine bullets, and I can shoot pretty straight in the dark."

"Bah—you cannot see us!" Brehm snarled and raised his head above the row of chairs just enough to search for this almost invisible marauder.

There was an explosion. Brehm felt his hair part and a bullet ripped into the wall. With a yelp of terror, Brehm pulled in his neck. He did not deride the Black Bat's boasts again.

"Listen!" he called. "You must be the Black Bat. Very well. You think you have us trapped. Why did you come here? To rescue two friends? Well, in two or three minutes they will be beyond rescue. They are tied up in the back seat of a car downstairs in the garage. The motor is running, a rubber hose leads into the car and all windows are rolled up tightly. Those friends of yours are dying. She is pretty and young, Black Bat. A shame she should die."

The Black Bat bit his lower lip hard. He tasted blood, but the pain brought him back to sanity, for his first impulse had been to rush for the cellar door. That was exactly what these two trapped spies hoped for. They could either get clear or trap the Black Bat in turn.

No one in the world was more precious to the Black Bat than Carol. He had no firmer a friend than Butch. But the Black Bat also thought of the damage these two killers could do if they escaped now. Important men should die, industries be blasted to bits. As a result, young Americans all over the world without proper equipment would die in battle.

This was no time to think of personal desires. The Black Bat's position was exactly the same as though he were on the battlefield. He had one objective that must be reached. A little more quickly now, perhaps.

He began moving forward. "They may be dead when I reach them, but both of you will pay for their lives right here and now. Take your choice—surrender, or die."

THE Black Bat was almost perfectly silhouetted against the windows now. Brehm could not afford to miss that chance. His gun rested on the back of a chair and he drew a bead on that elusive figure. The Black Bat's eyes, penetrating the darkness, watched all this. He could even see Brehm's face clearly and the spy gave ample warning when he was about to fire.

One of the Black Bat's guns exploded a split second before Brehm pulled the trigger. Both shots roared almost simultaneously, but Brehm's steady aim was destroyed as the Black Bat's steel smashed toward him. Brehm missed.

"One each now," the Black Bat said. He couldn't afford to wait another instant. Carol and Butch were dying in the cellar. Yet neither could he afford to kill these men. They knew who Dr. Mars was, and finding him was of prime importance.

Another shot rang out. No bullet whipped by the Black Bat. Instead, he heard a crash as a row of chairs fell. Schinkel stood erect for just one moment, then he dropped forward over the fallen chairs. He had taken the Nazi way out. Suicide!

The Black Bat waited no longer. Charging forward, he compelled Brehm to fire hurriedly. This bullet was low, straight, and it nicked the Black Bat's leg, but he kept going. Brehm came out of his hiding place and started to run. The Black Bat could have shot him, but instead he hurled one gun away, shoving the other in his pocket, lunged forward in a flying tackle and Brehm came down with a crash.

But Brehm was tough and well-trained in dirty fighting. His hands, fingers outspread, felt along the Black Bat's hooded face and tried to encounter the eyes. Brehm took a powerful punch in the midriff for that. He rolled over, carrying the Black Bat with him.

Brehm managed to get one hand behind him and whipped out a knife. It rose and, like a flash, the Black Bat's gloved hand reached out and rasped the spy's wrist. Brehm fought like a cornered wildcat then, screaming curses.

Time was slipping by fast. The Black Bat gave the spy's knife hand a terrific wrench. Bone cracked. Brehm shrieked in pain, and with his last bit of strength managed to half rise. The knife swept forward again. This time the Black Bat used a clubbed fist. Brehm twisted around violently. A gurgling came from his lips, then blood.

The Black Bat barely glanced at him, although he knew Brehm was dead. He had fallen on his own blade.

The Black Bat raced across the floor, flung open the cellar door and drew his second gun as he sped down the steps, three at a time.

He approached the car, swinging the automatic by its muzzle. Glass cracked and air seeped into the back seat. The Black Bat reached through the glass. opened the door and dragged Carol out first. She was unconscious.

Butch, curled up on the floor, had his eyes open, but he was unable to move from the toxic effects of the poison exhaust. The Black Bat hurried to the garage doors, opened them wide and carried Carol into the clear, sweet air. Then he returned for Butch.

IT REQUIRED twenty minutes to bring Carol around and she was sick for ten more, but the Black Bat cared for nothing except that she was alive. Butch, with his enormous strength, came out of it quickly.

"I thought we were goners that time," Butch acknowledged ruefully. "I tried to tear the car to pieces, but it couldn't be done. Then the exhaust started to get me and I got weak. Honest—I couldn't even raise my finger. I tried, but nothing doing."

"It was ghastly," Carol said. "They trapped Butch in the lobby of that building where that detective agency is. Brehm sensed that something might happen so he trailed along. Then they captured me. Butch was badly treated, but they got tired of it. Brehm telephoned and in a little while Dr. Mars came. I heard them call him that name, but they put out all the lights so we couldn't see who he was. He questioned us and we wouldn't talk."

"If I only could have slugged that weasel!" Butch groaned. "But no, he finds out we don't talk and he says, like he was inviting somebody to an ice cream party, 'Kill them! Make it look like an accident."

"Well, Brehm and Schinkel are dead," said the Black Bat. "That's the last of that particular batch of spies except Freytag who presents a fresh, unwholesome problem for us. Freytag knows I'm the Black Bat."

"I'll bust his neck!" Butch rose quickly.

"No, Butch," the Black Bat said. "Freytag menaces me more than anyone else. I've never killed a man in cold blood before—but there is always a first time, even though I hate the thoughts of it."

"Freytag is no better than these others," Carol said softly. "He came here to murder and burn. If he is caught, they will execute him."

"You're trying to make it easy," the Black Bat said wearily. "Yet you wouldn't do it yourself, Carol—even if you were a man and in my position. I'll have to take care of him some way. At least both of you are safe and Silk is all right. I wonder what Silk did when he returned home and found Freytag tied up on the divan?"

The Black Bat might have had a wry laugh had he seen Silk Kirby when the servant returned home. To have said that Silk was astonished when he walked into the house would have been to put it mildly.

Minus his disguise, he used the front door and found Freytag struggling savagely to free himself of his bonds.

"It is about time you came back!" Freytag yowled. "Get me free, idiot!"

Silk just stood there, enjoying this. "Well, well," he said. "Whoever got that idea is a friend of mine. Maybe I won't cut you free, Freytag. Maybe I'll turn you over to the cops just as you are."

Freytag ground his teeth together. "Please, Silk," he begged. "Brehm was here. He did this to me and even now he is on the Black Bat's trail. He means to kill him! Oh, I know Quinn is the Black Bat, and I must help him. Unless I do, I'm as good as dead, too."

The Black Bat's wry laugh would have been instantly stilled then, and deadly worry would had taken its place, for Silk did not hesitate any longer. He drew a knife and slit the ropes.

FREYTAG got up, massaged his wrists and glared at Silk. He walked away a pace or two, then sat down and one hand moved beside the overturned cushion of the chair. He had hidden a gun there and it was lucky that he had, too, because the Black Bat had disarmed him.

Silk started to question him, and stopped abruptly. He raised his arms shoulder high. Freytag was smiling coldly and there was murder in his eyes as his gun was leveled on Silk.

"I don't know whether or not to shoot you," he told Silk. "Perhaps it would be better if I tortured you a bit first. A bullet through the arm, another through the leg—"

"I don't care what you do to me!" Silk roared. "Where's Quinn? How did you find out he is the Black Bat? I know you zdid because you wouldn't he so sure of yourself if there were any doubts in your ratty little mind."

"I tricked him, with my superior intelligence," Freytag gloated. "Now you may recognize the fact that we of the Reich should master the world. It is our right by heritage and power. Because we are far more brilliant than the masses, and the wise should rule."

"Where," Silk asked coldly, "is Quinn?"

Freytag shrugged. "Gone hunting for Brehm and Schinkel. He'll get them, too. I don't care. I hope he does, because then I'll be free of the danger they offer. I am already clear of any menace from the electric chair."

"You're going to hold Quinn up! Make him support you, keep you in luxury, or else you'll show him up for the Black Bat. That's what's on your mind, isn't it?"

"Of course. I don't think I will kill you after all, Silk. You are too valuable. My shoes need shining often. I require someone to lay out my clothes, mix my drinks. Not the kind you mixed with that brandy, though. One more mistake like that and you will die."

"Look," Silk put down his hands. "Suppose Quinn won't support you, won't be blackmailed? Suppose he goes to the police and confesses that he is the Black Bat?"

Freytag wagged a finger. "Quinn would do no such thing. It would mean prison—death."

"That's where you're all wrong," Silk said. "The Black Bat never killed anyone except in self-defense. Even Captain McGrath admits that. Sure, he'll be pinched. Tried, too, but when a jury hears the good he's done, they'll hang a medal on him. But, Freytag, what do you suppose they'll do to you? As a spy you won't even be allowed the customary time to prepare for death. No long appeals, no stays of execution. Those other six of your kind didn't last very long after they were found to be guilty."

Freytag paled and wriggled deeper into his chair. Silk knew he had scored. He followed it up.

"I know a man who witnessed one of those executions, Freytag. I don't think I could stand watching one. There's the odor of searing flesh—the victim squirms and sweats. Some say they don't die right away. I've even heard it said they don't die at all, but pass into a coma, one in which their senses still live.

"And then comes the autopsy. They want to be sure you're dead, of course, before they bury you."

THE Nazi suddenly jumped up. His gun was raised and he brought it down against Silk's temple. Silk reeled back, stumbled and fell. He was dazed, helpless.

Freytag stood over him, pulling on the Black Bat's outfit which he had retrieved.

"So you think Quinn wouldn't mind admitting he was the Black Bat, eh? The Black Bat has never killed anyone in cold blood? Well, he will! Wearing this costume, I'll go out and murder an important person. I'll do it where there are witnesses. Perhaps I'll shoot four or five people. Why not? Everyone in this country is my enemy. Then we'll see if the Black Bat will consent to being arrested."

Silk tried to get up, but his muscles were paralyzed by that blow. He saw Freytag pick up his gun, fasten the hood securely over his head and rush toward the door.

A moment later the back door slammed shut.

CHAPTER XVIII
Masks Off

REACHING the open air, Freytag drew a deep breath and felt steadier. So they would try to outsmart him. He laughed harshly. No one who had been graduated from the sabotage school could be outsmarted.

By pinning murder on the Black Bat, he would have Quinn exactly where he wanted him. Besides, Freytag was a little eager for blood. He had spilled much of it in Poland and Czechoslovakia. He liked to see men double up and fall. He liked to stand over them and send bullets through their bodies.

Freytag ran through the back of the estate and came to the garden house. He kept on going and headed toward the street in front of Quinn's house. It would not be necessary to go far. There were rich and important people in the neighborhood.

He saw several big cars pulled up in front of an imposing house. That was it! They would probably be drinking cocktails or having supper. He would show them how a German could raid and plunder and kill.

Freytag laughed again, in anticipation. Then he stopped dead. A man had darted from behind a tree and there was a gun in his hand. Enough light came from the corner streetlamp to show Freytag that the man was Captain McGrath.

A police captain! Freytag shouted in glee and raised his gun. He fired twice. McGrath let out a howl of surprise. His service pistol leveled and crashed. Freytag felt a slug burn into his chest. He coughed, snapped his elbows close to his torso and coughed again. The pain was agonizing, and yet he did not fall. He would never fall. Germans were too tough.

McGrath started slowly advancing. Freytag turned and started to run. He twisted around and fired two more shots. McGrath crooked one arm and rested his gun on it. Freytag turned, too, trying to bring his gun to bear, but somehow he could not quite manipulate it. The gun was heavy—very heavy. It weighed a ton. So did he. His legs could no longer hold him up. But he was not dead. Oh, no—not Freytag.

McGrath's gun crashed. This time a curtain of blackness descended over Freytag. He swayed from side to side, then fell forward on his face. There was a bullet hole through the center of his forehead.

McGrath approached cautiously, muttering to himself.

"I never thought he'd shoot it out. Quinn must have gone crazy. Why, he was my friend. Sure, I teased him a lot, but I don't think I'd have pinched him. After all, the Black Bat only helped me and every other cop. But he shot first. He meant to kill!"

McGrath bent down, lifted the hood, and let out a startled exclamation.

"Freytag! No wonder Quinn was shielding him, and I figured Quinn as the Black Bat. Tony was only working with the Black Bat! Well, well. Now I'll make a pinch."

Someone came running down the street McGrath looked up and saw Commissioner Warner hurrying toward him. Warner gasped when he saw the cloaked and partially hooded figure.

"He tried to gun me out," McGrath explained. "You can see where some of his bullets hit that tree. The Black Bat finally turns out to be a killer—and he was Freytag."

Warner sent for help. Half an hour was spent while the medical examiner made his investigation. Then Warner and McGrath returned to Tony Quinn's house. Quinn was seated in the living room, cane between his knees, and he looked serene and calm. Andre Udall was there, too—at the request of Commissioner Warner. Ted Landis sat beside Quinn, and talked to him in a low voice. Silk hovered in the background.

McGRATH advanced toward Quinn.

"You're under arrest" he snapped. "No—not for being the Black Bat. I've been wrong about that, but you did aid and abet him. He lived here as your guest."

"May I speak now?" Quinn asked. "In a way, Captain, you're right. I was in contact with the Black Bat. I did aid and abet him, but only because I was forced to. The F.B.I. knows all about it and so does Commissioner Warner."

"Quinn has told me the entire story," Warner said. "This man Freytag, whom you killed, was a Nazi saboteur. One of those who landed here from a submarine. He was afraid of execution and came to Quinn because Tony was blind and helpless. Freytag figured he could dominate a blind man."

"He did, too," Quinn sighed. "Each day he gave me the name of one saboteur and told me how he would make contact. I notified the F.B.I. anonymously, because otherwise Freytag would not have talked any more. But earlier tonight I called G-man Reynolds and told him the whole story. All of those saboteurs are dead, killed before they could do any damage. Killing Freytag doesn't make any difference. He deserved it."

"Yeah?" McGrath scoffed. "Then what was Freytag doing in the Black Bat's clothes? He just made a mistake and put 'em on, I suppose."

"Hardly that," Quinn answered. "Freytag must have trailed the Black Bat and stolen that costume. I imagine he intended to carry out a reign of terror in it. So you see that by killing Freytag you probably removed the only man who knew who the Black Bat really was."

"I don't believe it." McGrath walked to the end of the room and leaned against the door jamb. "I'll never believe it. If Freytag is proven to be a Nazi spy and he was only in this country a short time, then Tony Quinn must be the Black Bat. There's no other answer because—"

McGrath stopped short, choked, then slowly raised his hands. He moved further into the room and a caped, hooded figure followed him. One gun was drilled against McGrath's back, the other in the hooded man's hand covered everyone else.

"Sorry, gentlemen," the hooded figure said. "McGrath is wrong all around. Quinn has told the truth. Freytag was a treacherous rat. He did outwit me, I'm sorry to say, and he intended to act just as Quinn has stated. If his plans had gone through, you'd have had a good reason to look for the Black Bat, McGrath, because there'd have been some cold-blooded murders that could have been chalked up to him."

Quinn arose slowly. "Thank you, Black Bat. Without your help I would have had a hard time working against those spies. Freytag mentioned a ringleader known only as Dr. Mars. Have you discovered who he is?"

"Yes." The hooded figure's gun turned toward Udall and Landis. "Tonight I fought two of those spies to the death, Brehm and Schinkel. But Schinkel was a coward and he tried to stall off his death by talking. He had a list of potential victims which I have destroyed. Their deaths would have plunged this country into chaos, and to Tony Quinn goes all the credit for the fact that this did not happen."

Landis ran a finger around his collar. "You said—you knew who Dr. Mars is."

"Schinkel named him and gave me proof," the hooded man said sternly. 'I'll name him for you now. He is—"

UDALL suddenly made a mad dive for the wall. His hand came down on the light switch and the room was plunged into darkness. There wasn't even a light in the hallway. Udall must have foreseen that something like this might happen and taken steps to insure a getaway.

"Don't move, any of you!" Udall yelled. "I'm in the doorway. If I sense a movement, I'll start shooting and I have two guns. Black Bat, you exposed me and your life pays the penalty! Unless you walk over and raise that window shade so I can see you, I'll begin filling this room with bullets."

Nobody moved. Nobody that Udall could see, but a figure was moving toward him. It was Tony Quinn, his cane raised high. Udall's two guns were leveling. He was about to open fire.

Quinn's cane whizzed through the air. Its point caught Udall between the eyes. Both guns went off, but Udall was already falling backward when his fingers pressed the trigger. The bullets tore holes in the ceiling.

Then Silk acted. He found the light switch, snapped it on, and McGrath made a dive for Udall, who was just sitting up. He disarmed the man and handcuffs clicked.

Commissioner Warner went to the telephone and a radio car arrived three minutes later. Udall was led out.

"Hey!" McGrath said. "Where's the Black Bat?"

"Do you suppose he'd stay here after the way you blasphemed his name, Captain?" Warner barked. "You can go back to the office now, McGrath. The only thing in your favor is the fact that you killed Freytag before he could do any damage. However, I don't think there'll be any medals for that performance."

In a short time the house was cleared and Silk bustled around straightening things. Finally he pulled the shades all the way down, opened the secret door to the lab and Quinn went in. Butch and Carol were there. Butch still wore the trappings of the Black Bat, except for the hood. That lay on a table.

"It ain't so easy being the Black Bat," Butch said. "Gosh, I have to watch my language all the time and I'm always scared I'll slip and say something the Black Bat wouldn't say."

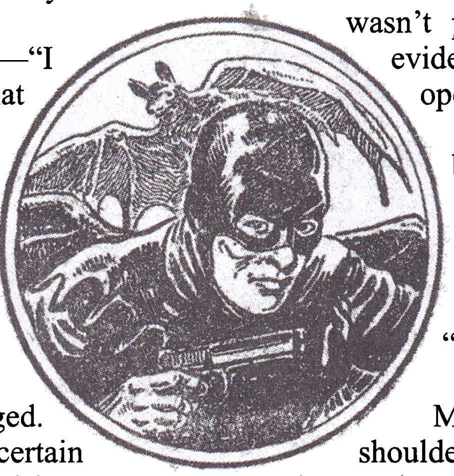
"Butch"—Quinn extended his hand—"you've carried the ball about all the way in this case. You and Carol. Don't feel bad about being rejected by the draft board. What you did for this country is far more than most soldiers could accomplish."

"That's right." Silk dug a hand into his pocket. "Here's that watch. You earned it."

"And the wallet." Carol opened her purse.

Quinn laughed. "That leaves only me to try and repay you, Butch. I'll get the money. You can buy your War Bonds with it. We also have a small fortune in diamonds. They won't buy any War Bonds. They've been sent direct to the Treasury to be used as a gift."

"Aw"—Butch rubbed his eye—"I didn't do so much. But I'll take that watch. Boy, it's a honey."



"Tony, I listened, of course," Carol said, "You didn't really know who Dr. Mars was, did you? We checked the registration plates of the car he drove to the singing society ball. It belonged to Landis. I thought he was guilty."

"So did I," Quinn acknowledged. "At first. But Landis did have certain things in his favor. He had handled important government contracts and possessed information which he could have used to advantage if he had been a spy. He didn't. Udall knew all about him, probably guessed the Black Bat would suspect him and aided that idea by stealing Landis' car. Udall pretended to be a very simple soul, but there were brains behind that forehead of his."

CAROL nodded her understanding! "Then you told Butch to mention no names and only to make a general accusation?" Carol asked.

"Yes. I knew that if Udall were Dr. Mars that we had little on him. I thought he'd react because he must have known Schinkel was a coward. How did I finally know that Udall was Dr. Mars? You gave me the clue, Carol. You said Brehm phoned Dr. Mars and that he came to the singing society hall in answer to the call. Well, for an hour before that time and an hour after, Landis was with Commissioner Warner. He had a perfect alibi. Udall always remained in the background. He came to see me because he knew darned well Freytag was living here, but Udall was afraid to act himself. He always left details like that to his aides."

"But he's the guy who fired those shots at us from outside the window," Silk put in.

"He is," Quinn said. "That was another way that I knew him. Udall walked with a shuffle. So did the man who tried to kill us. I suspected, but I wasn't positive, and there is no better evidence than to force a killer into the open by his own actions."

"Well, anyway," Silk said. "I'll bet we spiked McGrath's guns. He's not sure he didn't kill the Black Bat. He's not sure of anything."

"He will be," Carol smiled, "when he reaches his car."

McGRATH looked over his shoulder and threw the soggy stump of a cigar to the ground. He cursed, opened the door of his car, and blinked. There were six cigar boxes piled on the seat.

McGrath drew a flashlight and examined those boxes. The seals had been broken. But they were his favorite brand. He picked up one box and shook it. Then he grasped the lid with his fingertips and forced the little nail out of the wood.

On the inner side of each lid was a Black Bat sticker—a silhouette in the form of a bat taking wing. McGrath closed both eyes and swore some more for two minutes. Then he shrugged, put one of the cigars between his teeth and lit it. The smoke tasted good. He sat down on the runningboard and a slow grin spread over his face.

"Darned if I don't think I got these because I knocked off Freytag," he muttered. "Sure, he might have told me who the Black Bat was, but I'm not taking information from any rotten Nazi spy. Ahhh—for the first time in my life, I thoroughly like the Black Bat!"

THE END

THE MASK OF KIN PLATT *by Anthony Tollin*

Rounding out this volume, we present the third adventure of "The Mask," as first published in *Exciting Comics* #3 (June 1940). "The Mask" was a retitled adaptation of the Black Bat, necessitated by Better Publications' agreement with DC Comics that precluded the Black Bat from appearing in comics or Batman's appearances in pulp magazines.

Kin Platt

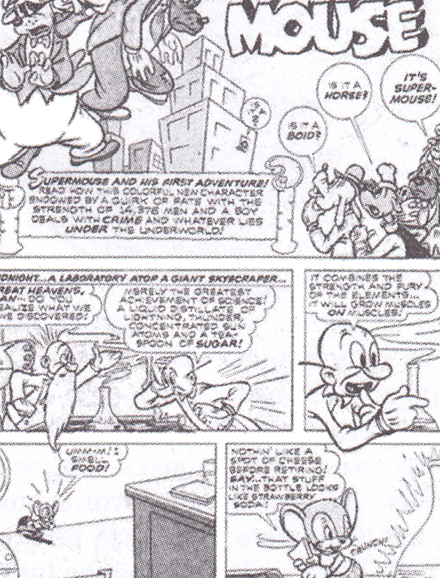
This installment introduced a new writer-artist for "The Mask," as the feature's original illustrator, Raymond Thayer, was succeeded by Kin Platt (1911-2003).

Just as the Black Bat's cowl concealed the scarred visage of former D.A. Tony Quinn, the name "Kin Platt" masked the birth name of one of the most versatile creators from the Golden Age of Comics.

Born Milton Platkin in the Bronx, the cantor's son graduated from Brooklyn's James Madison High School in 1929 and

joined the staff of Fleischer Studios the following year. Like many others in the entertainment industry, he quickly changed his name to avoid the pervasive anti-Semitism of 1930s America.

In addition to his animation work, Kin Platt wrote radio comedy sketches for Jack Benny, Burns and Allen, Stoopnagle and Budd and Edgar Bergen. He relocated to Hollywood in 1936 to pursue full-time radio work, but instead found employment in the story departments of MGM (where he scripted the 1938 Robert Benchley short *How to Read*), Walter Lantz Productions and Disney Studios.



Moving back to New York, Kin entered the burgeoning comic book field in 1939 when his 1936-37 Sunday newspaper strip "Happy" was reprinted in early issues of Ned Pine's *Best Comics* and *Startling Comics*. He also wrote and drew a variety of Nedor's mystery man features including "The Mask," "Doc Strange" (in *Thrilling Comics*) and "Captain Future" (in *Startling Comics*). In 1942, Kin created "Super Mouse" for *Coo Coo Comics,* a character that predated Mighty Mouse and was one of the rare Golden Age superheroes who continued to be published through the early years of the Silver Age, ending its long run in 1958.

During World War II, Platt served with the U.S. Army's Air Transport Command, earning the Bronze Star and producing his "Broad Views" cartoon panel for the India-China Division's *Hump Express*.

Returning to New York after the war, Platt went to work for the New York Herald Tribune Syndicate, producing the "Mr. and Mrs." strip from 1947-63 and "The Duke and the Duchess" from 1950-54. He also continued to moonlight in comic books, scripting "Widjet Witch" and "Cindy" for Martin Goodman and Stan Lee's Timely Comics line and the *Fox and the Crow*, *Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis*, *Bob Hope* and *Sgt. Bilko* series for DC Comics.

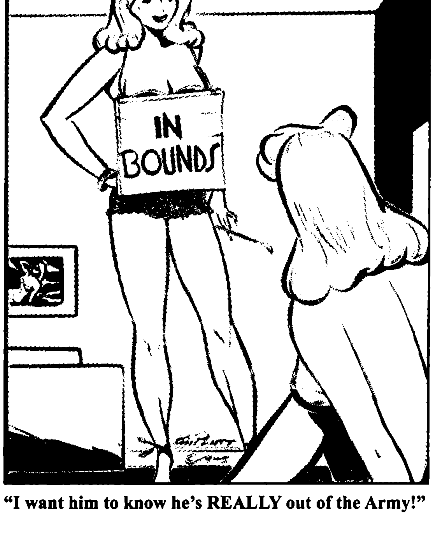
"Kin sort of looked like Groucho Marx and had both Groucho's sense of humor and delivery; a very funny guy," recalled Timely's humor editor Al Jaffee. "He was one of the truly gifted guys in the business, very smart and very talented. Whenever he came into the office, things got lively."

During the 1960s, Platt wrote scripts for a number of Hanna-Barbera's animated television series including *The Flintstones*, *Top Cat* and *The Jetsons*, and served as story director on *Jonny Quest*. He also wrote Young Adult mysteries under a variety of pseudonyms, including three novels in Alfred Hitchcock's *Three Investigators* series for pulp veteran Robert A. Arthur.

In 1967, the Mystery Writers of America awarded Kin Platt its prestigious Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Juvenile Mystery for *Sinbad and Me*, and he was again nominated in 1970 for *The Mystery of the Witch Who Wouldn't*, while the Southern California Council for Children and Young People presented him with its "Distinguished Book of the Year" award in 1974 for *Chloris and the Creeps*.

Sanctum Books is pleased to continue its reprinting of Nedor's "The Mask" with the first tale written and drawn by the multi-talented Kin Platt—radio comedy and animation scriptwriter, syndicated cartoonist, Hollywood screenwriter and Edgar Award-winning mystery author. •

BROAD VIEWS by Pfc. Kin Platt

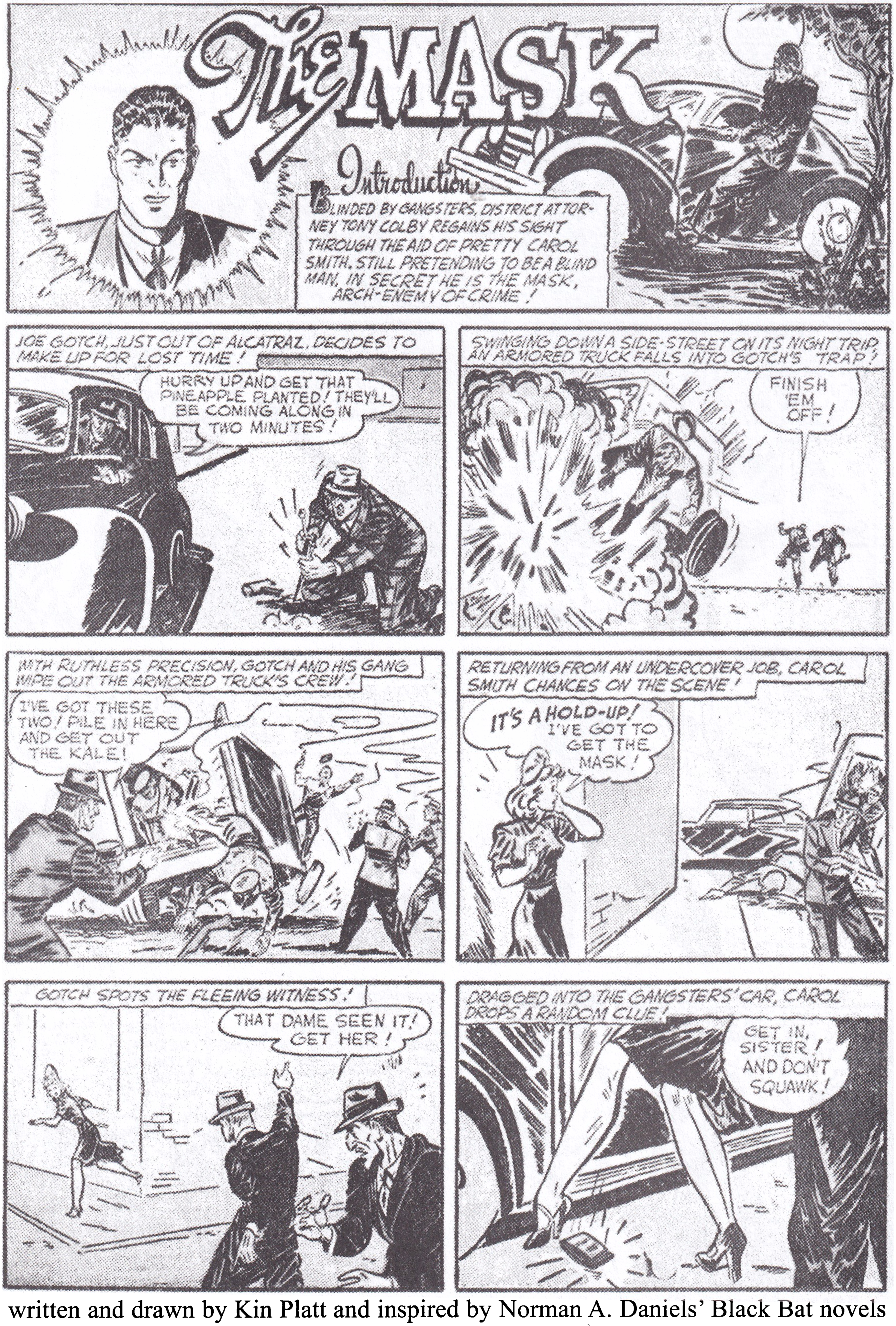


"I want him to know he's REALLY out of the Army!"

Pfc. Kin Platt (right) shows off some of his 1945 *Hump Express* original art to ICD civilian employee Daphne Scott and T/Sgt. Phil Stein.

BROAD VIEWS by Pfc. Kin Platt

"My replacement? Who th' hell wants a replacement?"



written and drawn by Kin Platt and inspired by Norman A. Daniels' Black Bat novels

TONY COLBY AND SILK, HIS TRUSTED RIGHT-HAND MAN, AWAIT CAROL'S RETURN!
IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TO PLANT CAROL IN THE CLUB SENEGAL AS A CIGARETTE GIRL! IT USED TO BE A GANG HANGOUT!
SHOULDN'T SHE BE BACK BY NOW?
SILK IS SENT TO THE CLUB SENEGAL!
YOU'D BETTER TAKE A LOOK, SILK! BUT WATCH YOUR STEP!
DON'T WORRY, SIR! I'LL BE ON THE LOOKOUT!!
AFTER TAKING CAROL TO HIS HEADQUARTERS, GOTCH ENTERS THE NOTORIOUS NIGHTCLUB BY A REAR DOOR!
MIGHT AS WELL CALL ON BAYOU JONES AND LET HIM KNOW WHO'S BOSS NOW!
SURE -- THIS DUMP WILL MAKE A SWELL HANGOUT!
DELIVERY ENTRANCE CLUB SENEGAL
BAYOU JONES, PROPRIETOR OF THE CLUB SENEGAL, PROTESTS!
I'VE HAD ENOUGH TROUBLE WITH THE COPS! I DON'T WANT YOU MUGGS QUEERING THIS PLACE!
BAYOU, I'M AFRAID YOU'VE HURT MY FEELINGS--
-- AND THAT AIN'T A VERY SAFE THING TO DO!
BIFF!
SILK OVERHEARS GOTCH'S BOAST!
FROM NOW ON THIS TOWN ANSWERS TO JOE GOTCH! THAT ARMORED TRUCK JOB WE PULLED TONIGHT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!
HEY! LOOK OUT BEHIND YOU, JOE!!
SILK IS CAPTURED!
WELL, WELL -- A STOOGE! BACK HIM AGAINST THE WALL, BOYS!
PLEASE, GOTCH! NOT IN MY PLACE!!
MEANWHILE, BUTCH O'LEARY, THE MASK'S STRONG-ARM AIDE, HAS JOINED THE SPECTATORS AT THE SCENE OF THE HOLD-UP!
ALL RIGHT, FOLKS -- GET BACK! THERE'S NOTHING TO SEE!
WISH I COULD FIND A CLUE!

written and drawn by Kin Platt and inspired by Norman A. Daniels' Black Bat novels

GOTCH HEADS FOR HIS HANGOUT!
SOMETHIN' CAME IN THAT DOOR AND GOT SLIPPY! IT GIVES ME THE WILLIES!
STOP BEEFIN'! WE GOT AWAY, DIDN'T WE?
MEANWHILE, BAYOU JONES FLEES WITH THE SUBMACHINE-GUN!
THE CLUB'S GOT A BAD ENOUGH NAME WITHOUT THE POLICE FINDING THIS TOMMY ON THE PREMISES! I'LL HIDE IT AT MY APARTMENT AND SEND IT TO GOTCH LATER!
WHEN THE LIGHTS FLASH ON AT THE CLUB SENEGAL, TONY COLBY IS SEATED AT ONE OF THE TABLES!
WHAT'S UP, WAITER?
IT'S JUST A LITTLE DISTURBANCE, MR. COLBY! NOTHING IMPORTANT!
PRIVATE
KEEPING HIS PRETENSE OF BLINDNESS, TONY HAS THE WAITER GUIDE HIM TO JONES' OFFICE!
SOMEONE FIRED A BURST OF SUBMACHINE BULLETS INTO THE WALL, COMMISSIONER!
DID I HEAR SOMEONE SAY "COMMISSIONER"? ARE YOU THERE, TOM?
HAVE THOSE SLUGS COMPARED WITH THE ONES WE DUG OUT OF THE ARMORED CAR GUARDS! TONY, I THINK THIS MAY BE CONNECTED WITH TONIGHT'S HOLDUP!
SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD HUNCH!
TONY DEDUCES GOTCH'S COMPLICITY IN CAROL'S DISAPPEARANCE!
SOMETHING TELLS ME I CAN FIND CAROL ONCE I PIN THAT HOLD-UP ON GOTCH! BUT I'LL NEED THAT TOMMY-GUN FOR EVIDENCE!
MEANWHILE, BUTCH AND SILK HAVE RUSHED TO TONY'S APARTMENT TO REPORT!
HE'S NOT HERE! UNLESS HE WAS THE ONE WHO---
THERE'S THE PHONE! YOU BETTER ANSWER IT!
TONY TELEPHONES BAFFLING INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE CLUB SENEGAL!
IT'S THE BOSS! HE WANTS US TO MEET HIM OUTSIDE OF GOTCH'S HOUSE TOOT SWEET!
IF IT'S MORE ACTION, I'M FOR IT!

written and drawn by Kin Platt and inspired by Norman A. Daniels' Black Bat novels

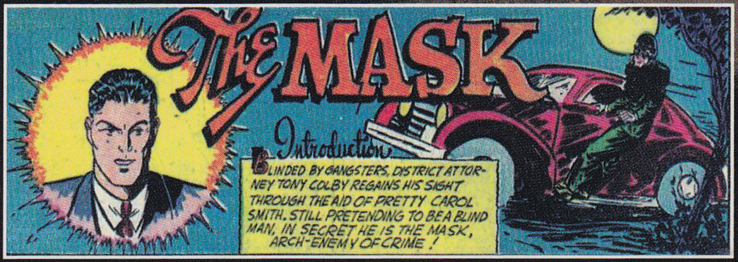
A 75th anniversary illustrated classic from Volume 1, Number 3 of *Exciting Comics*

Blinded and scarred by a mob acid attack, D.A. Tony Quinn makes the night his weapon as the Black Bat, Nemesis of Crime!

With the outbreak of World War II, foreign spies flood the United States to challenge the Nemesis of Crime in *The Black Bat's Spy Trail*.

A rogue Nazi agent offers Tony Quinn a deal he can't refuse in *Captains of Death*.

Plus **a Golden Age classic by Kin Platt!**



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